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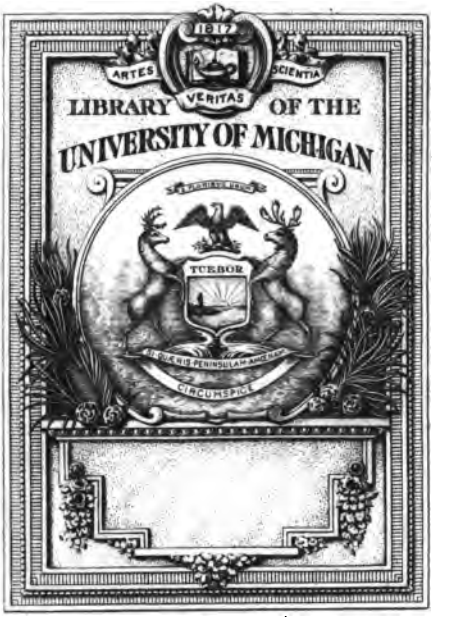

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"WE TAUGHT THOSE THAR RED DEMONS A LESSON THEY'LL NOT FORGET."
Page 36

UNIV OF MICH.

WITH CARSON AND FRÉMONT

BEING THE ADVENTURES, IN THE YEARS 1842–'43–'44, ON TRAIL OVER MOUNTAINS AND THROUGH DESERTS FROM THE EAST OF THE ROCKIES TO THE WEST OF THE SIERRAS, OF SCOUT CHRISTOPHER CARSON AND LIEUTENANT JOHN CHARLES FRÉMONT, LEADING THEIR BRAVE COMPANY INCLUDING THE BOY OLIVER

BY

EDWIN L. SABIN

AUTHOR OF "BAR B. BOYS," "THE MAGIC MASHIE," "BEAUFORT CHUMS," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

CHARLES H. STEPHENS

AND PORTRAITS

"We live in deeds, not years."

—PHILIP JAMES BAILEY

PHILADELPHIA & LONDON

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

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TO THAT BOYS' BEST FRIEND

THE MOTHER

AND IN PARTICULAR TO MY OWN MOTHER

ESTHER FRANCES SABIN

ABOUT WHOSE GRACIOUS NAME
CLINGS THE EVERLASTING
SWEETNESS OF HER MEMORY

Gift
Mrs. Katharine Warthin
5-2-1934

PREFACE

THE trail journals of the first two government exploring expeditions commanded by Lieutenant John Charles Frémont, of the United States Engineers, and advised by Kit Carson, mountain-man, are to be found together published, spring of 1845, as reports transmitted by the Secretary of War to the National Senate and House.

These journals, recording peril and privation faced for the wide public good and not for narrow private gain, occupy their honored niche among the golden archives of the Republic, and should be better known in American school and home. The trails themselves are eternal, denoted by names which have endured, many of them, unto this day. Of the men who may proudly and truthfully say, "I was with Frémont," or "I was with Carson," few indeed remain; and they will soon be gone, for man passes on, while that which he has wrought survives.

The Oliver Wiggins in this narrative is real. I have talked with him. He was the little boy under the wagon, and he was the Taos lad who won the Kit Carson rifle; he was upon the Frémont and Carson First Expedition, and he was upon the Second

Expedition, by way of the Salt Lake to Fort Hall. However, there he turned back, with the other Carson men. In taking him through, as in having him ascend the highest peak, voyage the Salt Lake in the rubber boat, and be prominent in various such adventures, I have added to his biography as told to me. Yet in these credits I have not exalted him more than is his due, for brave men rarely tell of all that they have done well.

The other personages also are real, as members of the Frémont or of the Carson party. Some of the conversation is quoted from the Frémont reports; the remainder is applied according to the characteristics of the speakers, or is adapted from sentiments expressed at divers times and places. The incidents of course are based upon the Frémont journals, with sidelights from the recollections of Major Wiggins, and from the Frémont "Memoirs of My Life," and like chronicles bearing upon the day.

The two principals, Lieutenant (later Captain, Colonel and General) Frémont, and Scout (later Colonel and General) Christopher Carson, thought highly each of the other; and this is warrant that they were manly men. Manly men respect manly men. Lieutenant Frémont said: "With me, Carson and truth are the same thing;" and he refers to their "enduring friendship." Kit Carson left all—new ranch, home, wife, dear associates—which, save honor, he valued most, to accompany the lieutenant upon a

Third Expedition, and in every crisis of march, camp, battle and politics he stuck stanchly to him. "I owe more to Colonel Frémont than to any other man alive," he declared. Thus friend should stand by friend.

This Third Expedition, of 1845–1846, again into the Great Basin and across the Sierra Nevada Range to the Valley of the Sacramento, was timed to the conquest of California by American arms; but it is another long story. Following the Third Expedition, having resigned from the Army Colonel Frémont, in 1848–1849, voluntarily conducted a Fourth Expedition, upon which many lives were lost to cold and hunger amidst the winter mountains of south central Colorado; and in 1853–1854, a Fifth Expedition, once more across the Great Basin to California. In these two expeditions Kit Carson did not take part. He had the duties of home, and family, which also are man's duties; and the duties of agent over the Ute and Apache Indians.

After that, came Civil War service for both friends, in fields separate.

EDWIN L. SABIN.

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA.
May 15, 1912.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Kit Carson to the Rescue	17
II.	Under the Wagon	30
III.	Oliver Wins His Spurs	43
IV.	Word from Old Fort Laramie	56
V.	Frémont Says "Onward!"	68
VI.	Into the Wilder West	87
VII.	Over the Famed South Pass	96
VIII.	Planting the Highest Flag	111
IX.	The Voyaging of the Platte	124
X.	Frémont Calls Again	135
XI.	In Hostile Territory	147
XII.	The Emigrant Trail	155
XIII.	To the Great Salty Lake	167
XIV.	Sailing the Inland Sea	178
XV.	On to the Columbia	192
XVI.	Southward for the Unknown	203
XVII.	Scant Christmas Comfort	216
XVIII.	Forcing the Snowy Sierras	225
XIX.	At the Last Gasp	235
XX.	Down Through California	248
XXI.	The Vengeance of Kit Carson	259
XXII.	Poor Tabeau Pays the Price	276
XXIII.	The Home Stretch	288

PAGE

ON THEY'LL
Frontispiece

..... 22

..... 71

RACK OF KIT
..... 104

FSS AND INERT,
..... 130

HREE, BY SIGNS,
COULD SPEED A
THROUGH..... 232

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

CHRISTOPHER CARSON	JOHN CHARLES FRÉMONT
Born Madison County, Ky., December 25, 1809.	January 21, 1813, born at Savannah, Ga.
Father: Lindsay (Linsey) Carson, of North Carolina and Kentucky.	Father: John Charles Frémont, of France and of Virginia.
Mother: Rebecca Robinson, of Virginia.	Mother: Anne Beverley Pryor, of Virginia.
Reared without education, on the Missouri frontier.	Educated by tutor and college at Charleston, S. Carolina.
Apprenticed to a harness-maker at Franklin, Mo.—1825.	1833–1836—Teacher of Mathematics to Midshipmen on Sloop-of-War Natchez.
On the Santa Fé Trail at Fifteen —1826.	1836—Commissioned Professor of Mathematics in the Navy, Assigned to the Frigate Independence.
Interpreter and Teamster, in New Mexico and Old Mexico —1827–1829.	1837–1838—Railroad and Army Surveyor.
Trapper to California—1829–1830.	1838—Commissioned Second Lieutenant, Topographical Engineers, U. S. A.
Rocky Mountain Trapper—1830 –1838.	1838–1839—Government Survey of Upper Mississippi River, under J. N. Nicollet.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

CHRISTOPHER CARSON	JOHN CHARLES FRÉMONT
Married an Arapahoe Indian girl —1835.	1841—Married Jessie Benton of Washington.
Hunter and Captain of Trappers, at Bent's Fort and Taos—1838–1842.	1841—Survey of Lower Des Moines River.
Hunter with the Frémont First Expedition—1842.	1842—First Government Exploring Expedition, to the South Pass and Frémont's Peak.
Married Josefa Jaramillo of Taos —1843.	1843–1844—Second Government Exploring Expedition, to the Salt Lake, to the Columbia, south through California, back by the Spanish Trail and the Rocky Mountains.
Hunter and General Assistant with Frémont Second Expedition—1843–1844.	1845—Promoted by brevet to First Lieutenant and Captain.
Goes to Ranching in New Mexico —1845.	1845–1846—Third Government Exploring Expedition, across the Great Basin into Northern California.
Guide and General Assistant with the Frémont Third Expedition—1845–1846.	1846—As Major Commands a Battalion for the Conquest of California.
Scout and Express Bearer under Colonel Frémont, Commodore Stockton and General Kearny, in the Conquest of California —1846.	1846–1847—Military Commander and Governor of California.
Express Service with Despatches Across the Continent to Washington—1847–1848.	1846—Promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel of Mounted Rifles, U. S. A.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

CHRISTOPHER CARSON	JOHN CHARLES FRÉMONT
Commissioned Second Lieutenant of Mounted Rifles, U.S.A., but the Commission not confirmed—1847.	1847–1848—Court-martialed at Washington for Insubordination, Found Guilty, but Recommended for Leniency.
Serves on Outpost Duty in California—1847.	1848—Resigns from Army.
His Express Duty of 1848 Completed, Becomes Private Citizen at Taos—1848.	1848–1849—Fourth Exploring Expedition, into the Southern Colorado Mountains; thence Forced Back, and to California by a Southern Route.
Seeks ranch life in New Mexico 1849–1850.	1849–1850—Seeks ranch life in California.
Scout Duty against the Indians, with Army Detachments—1850.	1850–1851—Senator from California.
Overland to California with a Drove of 30,000 sheep—1853.	1851–1853—California and Europe.
Government Indian Agent over Utes and Apaches, Quarters at Taos—1854–1860.	1853–1854—Fifth Exploring Expedition, across the Great Basin of Utah and Nevada to California.
Scout Duty against the Indians, with Army Detachments—1854–1855.	1856—Nominated by the Republican Party for the Presidency. Defeated by Buchanan.
Lieutenant-Colonel and Colonel, First New Mexican Infantry, U. S. Vols.—1861–1862.	1861—Major-General, Department of the West, U. S. A., headquarters at St. Louis.
Colonel of First New Mexican Cavalry, U. S. Vols., conducting campaigns against the Apaches, Navajos and Kiowas, New Mexico and Arizona—1862–1864.	1862—Resigns from Army, after service in Command of the Mountain Department of Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

CHRISTOPHER CARSON	JOHN CHARLES FRÉMONT
Military Service on the Santa Fé Trail and Special Commissioner to treat with Cheyennes and Arapahoes—1865.	1864—Nominated for Presidency. Withdraws.
Lieutenant-Colonel (Brigadier General by Brevet, for Distinguished Service) in command at Fort Garland, Colorado—1866–1867.	1866–1878—Railroad Construction, etc.
Resigned from the Army, on Account of Ill Health—1867.	1878–1882—Governor of Arizona.
Special Commissioner to Treat with the Utes, at Washington —1868.	1890—Appointed Major-General, on the Retired List.
Died at New Fort Lyon, Colorado, May 23, 1868.	July 13, 1890, died in New York City.

WITH CARSON AND FRÉMONT

I

KIT CARSON TO THE RESCUE

It was the middle of November, 1840; and across the sandy face of southwestern Kansas was toiling, outward bound from Missouri, a Santa Fé caravan: fifty-two huge, creaking canvas-topped wagons, drawn each by six or eight span of mules or yoke of oxen.

In this day the so-called foreign government of Mexico extended north through New Mexico to the Arkansas River in Colorado and southwestern Kansas. The United States stopped at the Rocky Mountains; and, moreover, from Missouri to the Rockies all was "Indian Country" and the "Great American Desert." From Missouri extended two long roads or trails, separating like a "V" with its point near present Kansas City. Up the Platte River, for the Northwest, ran the old trappers' and fur-traders' trail, now being made the Oregon Trail of emigrants. Up the Arkansas River, for the Southwest, ran the trail of the Santa Fé caravans. The desolate, unimproved

Great American Desert was like a sea; and across this sea sailed, spring and fall, upon an 800 mile voyage, fleets of American wagons, to trade with the capital of northern Mexico.

They took out cargoes of calico, powder, lead, flour, shoes, and such American products; they brought back, at profit in money and at loss in life, cargoes of furs, hides, gold, gay blankets and such Mexican products.

This caravan of November, 1840, with its fifty-two wagons and harnessed teams, had at the beginning of the journey stretched out in a line almost a mile of length. Each wagon had a teamster. Some of the teamsters straddled the near animal of the wheel span (the span next to the wagon); others, in their boots and flannel shirts and broad hats, walked beside the wagon; horsemen, escort to the wagon-captain, who was the boss of the train, led the march, reconnoitering ahead; other horsemen paced at right and left; and at the rear of all, upon an old mule, driving a collection of loose horses and mules, rode a ragged little boy—Oliver Wiggins.

This was Oliver's place—in the dust, at the tail of the long caravan. His duty was to herd the "cavvy," as was styled for short the *caballada* (Spanish for horse-herd). His pay was five dollars a month, and the fun and the glory, and the work, of fifty days' travel, at the rate of fifteen miles a day, across the plains of sand and sage, buffalo and antelope, hunger

and thirst, storm and Indians, to strange far-off Santa Fé.

At first the march had been very pleasant. The caravan sometimes had spread out over the prairie in formation of four abreast. By day the teamsters had sung and cracked their long whips, beside the wagons; by night they had sung and told stories, beside the camp-fires. Everybody had been happy. But within the last two days the atmosphere had changed; for there had come riding fast, on the homeward way from Mexico, two traders. and had left the word, with the captain:

"Watch sharp! The Kiowas are out!"

That was enough. Quickly through the caravan spread the news—"THE KIOWAS ARE OUT!" All carelessness, all singing, ceased; and the order of march was made double file or two abreast, so that in case of attack the wagons could swing to right and left and quickly join in a great circle.

The Kiowas! The fiercest fighting Indians of the Southwest plains were they, outrivalled by neither Pawnee nor Comanche. Their name was terrible to the Santa Fé traders. Their range was southwestern Kansas and southeastern Colorado, thence south into the dread Comanche country below the Arkansas. When the caravan had left Missouri, the Kiowas were said to be at peace; but now they were said, on good authority, to be *not* at peace, and well might Wagon-Captain Blunt worry. He had a lot of green

teamsters, poorly armed with old smooth-bore yagers; and whether, if given time to form a circle of wagons, they could beat off the painted warriors, he did not know.

Holding the rear of all, boy Oliver Wiggins, aged thirteen, left to the dust and the shuffling loose stock (defenseless beasts, a prize for the Indians), also well might worry. He wished now that he had not run away from home; and he began to wonder whether, after all, his pistol, about the size of the palm of his hand, was large enough. This pistol had seemed to him weapon in plenty for fighting Indians, in Missouri; but the farther from Missouri he journeyed, and the more stories he heard, the smaller the pistol grew.

Here in southwestern Kansas of to-day the Santa Fé Trail veered south, beyond the Great Bend of the river, to cross and to head for the Cimarron Desert and for New Mexico. This, the Crossing of the Arkansas, was half way to Santa Fé; but the half already covered was the easy half, the half to come was the dry, thirsty half, and the Kiowa and Comanche half.

Through the shallow water and the quick-sands forged the wagons of the Blunt caravan, upon the farther bank to halt, for camp and to fill the water-casks. The sun was low and red in the west, the long, high white-hooded wagons had been parked in the customary circle, outside the circle camp-fires were curling, pots were bubbling, meat was hissing, and before each camp tethered animals were grazing; sen-

tries had been posted, and boy Oliver, hungry and grimy, was guarding his browsing cavvy, when a sudden commotion struck the peaceful scene. A sentinel upon a sand-hill fired his gun to signal "Injuns! Injuns!" and rushed like wild-fire the word. Every teamster sprang to round up his picketed team, or to help collect the oxen; the sentries came in at a gallop; and men sped to help Oliver with the cavvy. Through the opening left in the circle of wagons poured men and animals, from outside to inside. And against the sunset glow could be descried a long file of black mounted figures, approaching at rapid trot.

However, Captain Blunt, viewing them by spy-glass, shouted thankfully:

"Not Injuns, men! Whites! Look like traders."

Whereupon a sigh of relief swept the tense cordon.

The cordon did not dare yet to open out again; nevertheless, as the riders across the rolling sand-hills neared, they were seen by the naked eye to be whites indeed. They resolved into a double file of horsemen: trapper-clad in fringed buckskin shirts and leggins, in broad-brimmed hats, in moccasins, and every man carried across his saddle-horn a tremendously long rifle.

"Mountain-men! Trappers!" announced Teamster "Dutch" Jake, in Oliver's hearing. "Now if we only had *them* with us——!"

"They're the chaps to make the Injuns stand 'round," agreed another. And many a head nodded.

The cavalcade was within gun-shot. A man riding

alone was leader; and as on they came, at the steady, fast "rack" or single-foot, straight for the camp, he held up his hand, palm outward, in a peace sign.

"High jinks! I know that man!" exclaimed "Dutch" Jake. And he added: "If it only be, now."

Captain Blunt and two or three of his lieutenants, carrying their guns, walked outside a few steps to meet this leader. The conversation was wafted clearly through the still, dry air, while all the camp listened.

"Howdy?"

"Howdy?"

"Who's yore captain?" This from the horseman.

"I'm the captain." This from Blunt.

"Wall, my name's Kit Carson. We've come over from Touse to ride the trail through Kiowa country, with anybody that needs us. S'pose you know the Kiowas air bad?"

"So we've heard. And we're mighty glad to see you, Mr. Carson," declared Captain Blunt, reaching up and shaking hands heartily.

Kit Carson! Kit Carson! The name passed from lip to lip around the wagon cordon; and a hundred eyes were fastened eagerly upon the spot where now this leader squatted beside a fire, as guest and counsellor of Captain Blunt.

The others in the party (which numbered about forty) had unsaddled like lightning, had turned their horses out, under a guard, and starting fires or gnawing strips of jerked meat were making their own camp

CHRISTOPHER CARSON

near at hand. Darkly tanned, long-haired, broad-shouldered men were they, the majority heavily bearded. They moved lithely in moccasins, their buck-skin suits were patched and stained, they scarcely stirred without rifle in hollow of arm, their belts bore pistol or pair of pistols, and knife; their talk was a curious jargon, but very expressive, and they themselves were exceedingly business-like.

But the wonderful Kit Carson, famous hunter and Indian fighter—was that really he? Of course, everybody on the Santa Fé Trail knew about Kit Carson, the free-trapper and captain of trappers, who as merely a boy had made such a name for himself in the mountains and who recently had come out of them, to live at Fernandez de Taos and to supply meat for Bent's Fort, north. Ere leaving the Missouri frontier little Oliver had heard of Kit Carson as though he were ten feet tall and four feet wide, and bore a pine-tree for a club; but now little Oliver beheld an ordinary-looking person, not much taller than himself and not nearly so tall as many of the other trappers; with wiry body, bandy legs, flat features, and a voice so ridiculously low that his present conversation with Captain Blunt did not carry beyond the camp-fire light.

Murmured comment by teamsters, here and there among the wagons, showed to Oliver that he was not alone in his disappointment.

"That's Kit Carson, is it?"

"That leetle feller, with the captain yon?"

"Wall, naow, I thought Kit Carson war some punkins!"

"A big Injun's liable to pick him right up!"

"Whar's his whiskers?"

But Dan Matthews, Captain Blunt's first lieutenant, came hurrying, from point to point in the circle.

"Turn out your critters, men; and you guards post yourselves as before. Lively. There's likely no danger to-night, Carson says; but keep your eyes and ears open, jest the same."

"Is that thar reely Kit Carson—that leetle chap?" queried Teamster Henry, as the camp bustled to resume its routine.

"Yes."

Henry grunted.

"Wall, he's the smallest pea for the amount of pod ever *I* see!"

"Don't you be fooled, Henry," retorted Lieutenant Matthews. "You wait a bit, and if you don't find that he's got the biggest *do* for the size of his *tell* that ever you ran across, I'll eat my hat."

"That's right," affirmed "Dutch" Jake, overhearing. "Brag's a good dog but he won't fight; an' you mustn't jedge a race-hoss by the color of his hide. You're seeing one Kit Carson, a gentle-speaking, mild-appearing, sort o' nincompoop who you might think didn't know beans. But there's another Kit Carson, half hoss an' half alligator, as they say on the Mississippi, or half grizzly b'ar an' half charging elk,

as *I* say; an' I reckon you'll see him, too, 'fore we're through Injun country."

These words of "Dutch" Jake impressed Oliver deeply, for Jake spoke as if he knew. At any rate, 'twas pleasant to have the reinforcements: to watch their easy figures, to hear their voices, to stroll through their camp and catch their conversation, to note their fringed, beaded clothing, their worn weapons, and their wildly shaggy faces; and to feel their presence, so handy, when in the darkness the fires died and both camps went to sleep.

All the next day the march proceeded, southward from the Arkansas, amidst sand hills and sparse vegetation. The trappers from Taos rode in a line along either side of the train, with scouts ahead and out upon the flanks. The men of the train laughed and talked, bantering back and forth. And behind, in the reek of the procession, boy Oliver, ragged and upon his old mule, driving the cavvy, strained eye and ear to keep tab upon what was being done and said. At the noon camp he had opportunity to scan, close by daylight, Kit Carson again.

Kit Carson proved to have a square face, rugged and weather-beaten, with sandy moustache, and framed in long brown hair combed smoothly down behind the ears. His cheek-bones were high, somewhat Indian-like, his forehead was high and full, his mouth straight and his chin firm. His most remarkable feature was his eyes—wide apart, level-set, and of an

intense steely gray that fairly bored a hole where they looked. His movements were quick and sure; and how he stuck to a horse!

Oliver the more believed that "Dutch" Jake and Lieutenant Matthews both knew better than Henry and the other grumblers. Something about Kit Carson said so.

Despite the rough joking, the march was an earnest one. No straggling was permitted, to shoot antelope or elk. Yet the day was not uneventful, for once a great brown-bearded man—his beard reaching almost to his belt—who was Solomon Silver, a Carson man, dropping back, rode beside the cavvy until, having good-naturedly eyed Oliver, he joined him, to query, perhaps as a joke:

"Wall, boy; what'd ye reckon to do if the Injuns come down sudden?"

"I'd fight 'em," said Oliver, bravely. "Here's my pistol. See?"

"Haw! Haw!" boomed Sol Silver the trapper, in a rousing laugh; and behind his beard he chuckled. "That's right, boy. Let's see that shooting-iron o' yorn," and he laid it in the palm of his scarred hand. "No use o' Kit an' us a-riding the trail, when this air riding it too. I'll tell him. 'Spec' if you shoot an Injun with this, son, an' he gets to find out, he'd be powerful mad at ye! But thar, boy; do yore best. Hyar's 'nother kind o' pistol. Ever see one?" And he pulled it from his buffalo-hide belt.

"No," confessed Oliver.

It was an odd-looking pistol, with long barrel and a round bulge between barrel and stock.

"That air a pistol to shoot six times without reloading," declared Sol. "It has one barrel an' six chambers, in this cylinder; the barrel stays put, but the cylinder turns 'round, with a fresh load ready, whenever trigger air pulled. Wagh! It air made by a man named Colt, in the States; it air called Colt, but it air a full-size hoss."

"Have you all got them?" asked Oliver.

"All we Carson men have 'em, an' percussion-cap rifles, to boot. When Kit Carson goes into a fight, he goes in to win, an' the best weapons air none too good for his men. We air Carson men." Sol proclaimed this with a certain degree of pride.

"Will the Kiowas attack us, sure?" invited Oliver.

"'Bout to-morrow, Kit thinks. When they do, you give us fellows a chance 'fore you open up with yore battery an' take all the scalps."

But Oliver suspected that Sol was joking again. Still, he liked this jovial, burly Sol Silver, and hoped that he *would* tell Kit Carson.

Nothing especial happened this night in camp, save that Captain Blunt and lieutenants passed about, examining all the guns and asking if powder-horns were full. But at the breaking of camp, in the dawn, when the wagons were forming to pull out in the double-

column, something very especial happened. Behold, into every wagon climbed a trapper or two, and stowed themselves safely away amidst the goods under the protective canvas hoods! Just a corner of the canvas was left looped up a few inches, as if for air.

Now throughout the caravan eddied a gale of jeer and derision and protest.

"This is the way they ride the trail with us, is it!"

"These ain't mountain-men; they're gophers!"

"Have we got to haul 'em an' fight for 'em, both?"

Even Kit Carson had disappeared, for cover. But no response was made by the trappers; Captain Blunt and his assistants bade the teamsters "Ketch up!" and straighten out, for the march; and two by two on rolled the wagons, the teamsters angry, the trappers comfortably inside, and the trappers' horses tethered to the end-gates.

The action on the part of the trappers seemed as strange to boy Oliver as it did to the teamsters. Was that how Kit Carson men battled—by hiding behind other men, and by crawling under cover and making the people they were pretending to defend fight outside? Humph! Maybe this wasn't Kit Carson, after all.

The sand-hills were increasing in number and extent; dusty and dry was the way but nobody could drink, for it was against orders to drink out of the casks, or to fill canteens except once a day. The "dry

march" of over fifty miles was beginning, and sometimes water gave out before it was traversed. So every drop must be cherished.

With the hot sun about two hours high the caravan was entering upon a long, rather narrow swale leading between rounded sand-ridges whereon only cactus and a few sprawly weeds grew. Captain Blunt and several other riders were in advance; out upon the right flank, and somewhat in advance rode Lieutenant Dan Matthews and two men, and similarly upon the left flank rode another wagon-train lieutenant. They climbed hill after hill, and ridge after ridge, and surveyed closely the country. As a rear-guard, behind even Oliver, rode a squad of half-a-dozen traders and free-lances. Thus the caravan was apparently well provided against surprise; and as evidently the Kiowas were thought to be near at hand, the rear-guard gave Oliver a more comfortable feeling.

If the train must take care of itself, with those trappers cravenly putting greater store on their own hides than on the purpose for which they had pretended to join, then the more precautions the better.

II

UNDER THE WAGON

How quietly wound the train, between the low dun hills! No lashes cracked, no voices shouted, mule, ox and horse steadily plodded, and the only sounds were the subdued words of the teamsters encouraging their animals, and the creaking of the dry wagon-frames. But hark! Right in the midst of this brooding atmosphere drifted down from the hills upon the right a rifle-report; and when Oliver caught sight of the place, here came, full tilt, from flankers' duty, Dan and his comrades; behind them the smoke of the report was still wafting.

"Injuns!" This was the alarm. Instantly the caravan was again in a frenzy of commotion. Teamsters curled their lashes and sent their mules into a lope, their oxen into a lumbering trot; loud rose a medley of exclamations, orders, rumbling of wheels. From behind little Oliver, who, his heart in his mouth, was shouting at his lazy cavvy, urging them forward (Oh, such a long way must he go!), rode for him the rear-guard.

"Quick! Roust these critters!" they bade, one to another, and helped him. The cavvy was forced into a trot.

UNDER THE WAGON

From right and left and before, the flankers and van-guard were hustling in, bending low and lashing their horses. Now another report of rifle drifted in; another, and another! Barely pausing in their mad flight, Dan and his two comrades were turning in saddle and aiming to their rear; jets of white smoke sped from the muzzles of their guns, as one after another they fired. For there were the Indians—issuing from the crest of the sand-ridge, as if springing out of holes, and pouring over, down the slope, trying to catch Dan and the other men. They must be Indians, because they flourished lances, and because they were naked, with feathers streaming in the breeze.

But they couldn't overtake Dan and his men.

Now from the opposite slope echoed more shots. Indians here also! See them come, after that squad of scouts! Why didn't the trappers get out from the wagons, and help? Why didn't the cavvy travel faster? What a lot of Indians! And would the wagons be parked, in time, and would there be a hole left for the cavvy? Supposing there wasn't, and he, Oliver, must stay outside!

"Roust those critters! Roust those critters!" urged the men with Oliver, as in the dust and the hubbub and the excitement they all shrieked together.

Almost crying, in his earnestness, little Oliver did his best.

As fast as they arrived at trot and gallop the wagons swung to right and to left, tongues inside,

front wheels locked with hind wheels of the previously arrived, the teams were unhitched, the teamsters knelt to thrust their yagers between the spokes and aim. Smaller and smaller grew the opening, as the oval closed—but amidst yell and murk, in through the opening galloped at last the cavvy, and like the rest little Oliver, breathless, gasping, found himself "forted."

None too soon was it! Down streamed, on either flank, the foe—a hideously screaming, whooping, feathered, painted foe: riding, many of them bridleless, most of them garmentless, brandishing tufted lance and strung bow, with here and there a gun, face and body daubed lavishly with red and yellow.

"Kiowas!" ran through the wagon-fort the muttered exclamation. And——

"Get out o' there, you trappers! You Kit Carson men!" rose the angry cry. "Get out o' yore holes an' show what you can do!"

But from within the wagons answered never a sound nor a stir.

However, 'twas no time nor place, now, to berate the dastard mountain-men, so false to their reputation. The teamsters were green; the wagon-fort had been poorly formed, in the haste; the location was bad, for defense; and darting from wagon to wagon, along the circle, Captain Blunt and other leaders besought the defenders to keep cool and hold their fire.

The painted Kiowas on-rushed as if they were to

ride right over the wagons! "Bang!" spoke the yager of a teamster. And "Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bangity-bang!" bellowed the smooth-bores as his excited mates pulled triggers. In vain Captain Blunt and his aides ran, ordered, implored, threatened. The Kiowas were two hundred yards away; too far for a clumsy yager—but at the volley every one fell from his horse. Were they all killed? Were they? Hurrah, thought little Oliver. No—a fellow in bright yellow leggins was left! But at the "pop!" of little Oliver's pistol he, also, fell over! Then——

No! More were left, on this side; and on the other side! See? Even the yellow-leggins had come to life. Saddle-pad after saddle-pad miraculously grew a figure, and on dashed the Kiowas again, as many as ever, with joyous yelps charging empty guns. That was what they had hoped for—empty guns.

Realizing, the panicky teamsters fumbled and made mistakes, as rattling their pieces among the wagon-spokes they would pour powder, ram ball, prime pan, cock, aim, fire. Disdaining to hang now by thong-loops upon the opposite side of their horses, with bows drawn, lances poised, and a gun or two speaking, the wild redmen of the sand-hills bore headlong for the weakly answering caravan.

So swiftly they neared! Ere half the yagers had been reloaded they were within fifty yards. Could anything stop them? With thud upon thud their arrows pelted in and through. Their paint patterns

were plain, their faces glared, their guttural exclamations could be heard—and boy Oliver, with one last frantic glance about, dived under a low-hung wagon.

Even as he did so, he heard a new sound. It was not "Bang!" and "Bang!" It was "Spat!" "Spat! Spat!" and "Whing!" The wagon over him swayed, a fresh fume of powder-smoke floated to his nostrils. The trappers! He had forgotten the trappers! They had fired, at last, from beneath the wagon-covers—but they were too late.

It seemed to little Oliver that he waited a long time for the charge. He still heard the whoops and grunts of the Kiowas, right at hand—they were coming, coming, coming! They would scalp the whole caravan, and steal all the cavvy! And while he waited, clutching his pistol, another sound arose. Inside the wagon-fort was a new commotion—a clamor of voices, a shuffling of hasty feet, a rattle of stirrup and a thud of many hoofs!

Had the Kiowas broken through? They must! The wagon over him swayed again, something struck it, almost shoved it to one side; he peered, craning his neck to see into the dust—and a set of hoofs passed right over his head. He glimpsed a buckskin rider, on the *outside;* a trapper had forced his horse between the loosely locked wheels of the two wagons, and was on the *outside!*

The Kiowas were here, too. Many were upon the ground, and the red which stained them was redder

than the red of vermilion paint. Yes, many and many were upon the ground. But the others were charging about; little Oliver had not been waiting long, after all. He knelt, trembling in his eagerness. There were still a host of Kiowas, and they were very angry. The wagon-fort must be fairly oozing trappers, mounted; for from either direction they were galloping into the field, their lines loose, their buckskin-clad, fringed bodies leaning forward, pistol in hand.

Across the little space, to the line of prone and doubled figures they raced. "Bang! Bang!" jetted their pistols. The live Kiowas, dodging and hanging to the necks of their ponies, parted before the countercharge, swerved at the volley, let the trappers into their midst—and with a great savage yell of vengeance turned, to close. For the trappers' pistols were empty, as the teamsters' yagers had been! Now long scores would be settled; a trapper's scalp was worthy many a dance.

But what a surprise! With "Bang! Bang!" the pistols spoke again and yet again and again, and needed no reloading! Down from their ponies plunged stricken Kiowas, fierce career ended; around wheeled the unstricken, lying low upon pony backs, hammering pony sides with desperate heels, fleeing the wondrous medicine of the whites. And through the lodges of plains and desert spread the wail: "White man shoot one time with rifle and six time with butcher-knife!" Thus before the eyes of boy Oliver, under the wagon, was

broken by Kit Carson and his men the power of the caravan pirates.

Cheering and lashing, the trappers made pursuit clear out of sight. All around the wagon-fort the battle had resulted the same. With that result the teamsters really had little to do, after their first ineffective volley; and they could only stare, open-mouthed, when so unexpectedly the trapper rifles emptied the saddle-pads in earnest, and without hesitation out the trappers charged. They still were staring, scarcely crediting, when back the trappers rode, in little squads, grim and weary, but not without their banter. Slipped under the belts they brought scalps. Oliver saw Sol Silver, and he recognized others—and he found Kit Carson.

Kit Carson chanced to ride close in, past Oliver's wagon, and paused here to shake hands with Captain Blunt. His face was flushed and his lips tight together; and his eyes! They were terrible eyes, not now steel-gray but a vivid blue, flaming like living amethysts or like blue stars.

"Yes, sir," he said, in reply to Captain Blunt's congratulations. "We taught those thar red demons a lesson they'll not forget. It's all over. Go ahead with yore caravan."

Hearing, Oliver shame-facedly crawled out from beneath the wagon; and it seemed to him that Kit Carson the Great saw him, and smiled friendly at him.

Some of the teamsters would have liked to mingle

with the trappers and to rehearse what had been done, and what had not been done, and what might have been done, in the short fight; but "Catch up! Ketch up!" and "Fall in, men!" rang the sharp orders of the caravan officers. Time had been lost, water was dwindling, every moment was precious; the march must proceed at once.

So team after team settled to collar and yoke, wagon after wagon lurched forward; and presently little Oliver was once more in the rear of all, driving his cavvy through the drifting dust. Strangely enough, not a man of caravan or trappers had been wounded, and only one mule had received an arrow, in the hip.

"Wall, boy, how'd you like the Kiowas?" It was Sol Silver, again, back beside Oliver. Brown-bearded and burly, he looked the same as ever and as if he had not been in any fight. But tucked in his belt were two scalps. "Whar's yore pelts for trophies?"

"I haven't any. I wasn't close enough," answered Oliver, truthfully.

"Didn't I see you chasing the chief on yore mule?" invited Sol. "Kit took one chief an' you took t'other."

Oliver flushed, and shook his head.

"No, I didn't. I didn't try."

"Whar war ye, then?"

Oliver flushed more and hung his head.

"Under a wagon."

"Haw! Haw!" roared Sol, and chuckled through his beard. "What war the matter?"

Oliver wanted to cry.

"I guess I was afraid."

"Haw! Haw!" roared Sol. "Guess mebbe you war." Then he sobered. "You fetched yore cavvy in, though, I hear tell."

"Men helped me."

"But you come in behind an' not ahead, jest the same," asserted Sol. "That war right. Warn't ye afraid the Injuns'd get ye, 'fore you war forted?"

Oliver nodded.

"That's right, that's right," said Sol. "You corralled yore cavvy fust, an' then you crawled under the wagon. Don't blame ye for being afraid. Only a fool's never afraid. Being afraid doesn't make anybody a coward. I 'spec' you thought us trappers war afraid, too, when we crawled into the wagons, 'fore you crawled under one."

Oliver must nod again.

"We warn't; not this time. But I reckon we've all been afraid, many another time. This time we crawled into the wagons so the Injuns wouldn't see us. If the Injuns spied Kit Carson men riding with a wagon-train they'd never attack, you bet. These Southwest Injuns know us Kit Carson men by sight, now. An' you jest say 'Kit Carson' to 'em, an' out comes the peace-pipe mighty quick. They can depend on Kit to fight 'em if they're bound to fight, or to talk

straight with 'em if they want to talk straight. He air a bad enemy, an' he air a best friend. He shoots plumb centre, with both tongue an' rifle."

The noon camp was very brief; long enough only for the animals to breathe, and for the men to munch a strip each of dried meat, while coffee boiled. But it was long enough for Oliver to sidle near where Kit Carson appeared to be telling stories to a group of caravan men. Anybody should know that Kit Carson must have marvellous stories to tell.

"But what about that time you sneaked on hands an' knees, through the snow, close to the Injun fort, near head o' the Arkansas, an' cut the hosses loose an' drove 'em off with snow-balls?" asked Teamster Henry.

"When war that?" inquired Kit Carson, as if mildly surprised.

"Some years back. When you fust went into the mountains."

"Oh," said Kit Carson, slowly rubbing his chin. "That war some o' Captain Gant's men. Captain Gant had lost some hosses, by these Crows, an' his men went an' got 'em. Can't do without hosses, in the mountains."

"But weren't you along?"

"Wall, I might have followed," drawled Carson, uneasily. "I don't exactly remember 'bout that. They war brave fellows, though. They——"

"Reckon you've made a heap o' Injuns run, all the same," interrupted an admiring caravaner.

"Sartinly, sartinly," agreed Kit Carson. "Part the time I've been running after them, an' most the time they've been running after *me*."

"You gave 'em a good dose this time, though."

"Wall, we had to; we had to. My men had to," declared Kit Carson, and he brought down his clenched hand. "But we didn't like to; that is, we oughtn't to like to. Nobody likes to kill human beings; an' these Injuns, pore critters, ain't been raised to know any better'n to rob an' murder. They think this hyar's their country, an' we whites air using up the game they depend on. But o' course, these Kiowas come down 'specting to wipe out a defenceless train that warn't doing 'em any harm, an' we simply *had* to shoot into 'em. If this caravan didn't lick 'em, proper, some other caravan must. Now the job's over."

"How many did you kill, of 'em? You got the chief, didn't you?"

"Me?" queried Kit Carson, again mildly surprised. "Oh, thar war jest a lot o' shooting an' riding around, an' we did the best we could. We war lucky to have these six-shooter pistols—revolvers, they call 'em. Ever see 'em before?"

"You'll never get him to talk about himself," warned a trapper to a listener near Oliver. "Sometimes he will, with Injuns, 'cause they understand boasting, an' they all know Kit Carson. But 'tain't

white man way with him. So you might as well quit. He hates the leetle letter 'I.'"

"That's heap weepon, shorely," commented a teamster, examining. "Beats the big gun of that boy, yonder."

Now, this caused everybody to look at Oliver, which was most embarrassing. He was well aware that his little pistol was not so grand as these new-style revolvers; and he did not like to be laughed at. But Kit Carson, as if glad to change the subject from himself, smiled and said quickly:

"Hello, boy. You're safe, they say, an' so's yore cavvy. You'll make a warrior yet."

Oliver must hang his head and turn and twist. He didn't deserve such praise.

"Yes, sir; but I crawled under a wagon," he blurted. "I didn't fight any."

"Haw! Haw!" rose the laughter.

"Wall," remarked Kit Carson, quietly, but clearly, "I've seen many a time when I wished I war under a wagon, myself."

At this moment "Catch up! Ketch up!" sounded the calls, and the talk must end, while the caravan resumed the trail.

Not another Indian came into sight, as the train plodded on, with the Kit Carson men still acting as escort. At sunset camp was made for the night, beside a dried water-course where grew a few hardy cottonwoods. Sitting wearily his old mule, watching

his cavvy until the night guard should relieve him, little Oliver wished that he was by one of the trappers' mess-fires instead, where Kit Carson might smile upon him, again. However, while he sat upon the mule, a figure rode to him, through the dusk. It was the booming Sol Silver, once more. Sol spoke direct.

"Boy, Kit sent me to ask how'd you like to go on to Touse with us, 'stead o' to Santy Fee with the caravan?"

Oliver gasped.

"Can I? With you!"

"If you want to, an' if Kit decides so. We take the Touse trail in the morning. Now, if you're to come, thar'll be a fire made at the foot o' that thar cottonwood, standing out alone. See it? Wall, if you see the flare, pretty soon, you'll know. But you'll lose yore wages from the caravan. They'll not pay ye less you go through to Santy Fee with 'em."

"I don't care," stammered Oliver. "I'd rather go to Touse, with you. Can I be a Kit Carson man?"

"Reckon you can, some time, if you got it in you; an' if Kit thinks you have, you have. All right; don't say anything, an' watch for the fire."

Sol rode back to his mates. Oliver watched anxiously. Hurrah, the fire flared, just as he was trudging to supper. And when, in the morning, caravan and trappers parted company, into the west on the Taos trail rode with the Kit Carson men little Oliver Wiggins.

III

OLIVER WINS HIS SPURS

THAT evening, with clatter of hoof and volley of victorious whoops and rifle-shots, amidst the sunset they galloped into the New Mexican village of Don Fernandez de Taos, sixty miles west from where they had parted with the Santa Fé bound caravan.

Taos, or "old Touse," as it was affectionately styled, lies in a mountain valley eighty miles north of Santa Fé. Here had his home and headquarters Kit Carson, captain over his company of forty-five trappers. He lived in one of the box-like clay houses, with his little daughter Adaline. Adaline, four years old, was a dark, elfish lass, half Indian; for her mother, Kit Carson's wife, had been an Araphoe. Kit had married this Araphoe in the mountains, in the summer of 1835, but she had died soon after the birth of little Adaline.

"Kit thought a heap o' Alice," declared Sol Silver, to Oliver. "Some trappers jest take a squaw as cook an' lodge cleaner, an' all that. But Kit air true man. He named his squaw Alice, an' when she died he felt mighty bad. He's got that gal to raise, now."

The Kit Carson company of trappers were divided into two bands, under Lieutenant Ike Chamberlain and Lieutenant Sol Silver. They took turns going upon

excursions after beaver—or sometimes they all were out together.

Besides the beaver-hunting, there was the buffalo-hunting for Bent's Fort. Northeast of Taos, 250 and more miles, upon the Arkansas River in southern Colorado of to-day, was the large clay-built trading-post of Bent's Fort, or Fort William, its hardy garrison trafficking with 20,000 wild Cheyennes, Utes, and Arapahoes.

Kit Carson had the contract for supplying the garrison with meat. So twice a year, in spring and in fall, the Carson men gathered at Bent's Fort, for a great buffalo-hunt. Into the fort were brought thousands of pounds of buffalo-meat.

The great Kit Carson did not seem to think much of Oliver, after landing him in Taos. He gave him a place to sleep and a place at table; but he did not send him out to trap beaver, or hunt buffalo, or rescue traders. He put him upon the shabby mule, and set him at his old job of tending a horse-herd.

"It's this way, boy," consoled Sol Silver, when Oliver would complain. "You do well what's yores to be done, an' chance at more will come."

The extra horses and mules belonging to the Kit Carson company were pastured in the open on the outskirts of town. Every morning they must be driven out to graze, and every evening they must be brought back to the corral. It was Oliver's business to drive them out and to drive them back—which he did with

many shouts and much rope-waving and gallant racing by his ancient mule. Thus for a year he was the official herder for the Carson company.

The Carson men came and went. Oliver heard their stories, of stirring deeds by themselves or by Bill Williams, Jim Bridger, Captain Billy Sublette, and others; and by Kit Carson. On the other hand, he never heard "Kit" (as his friends lovingly called him) make much mention of himself in any adventures; somebody else always was the hero.

When home in Taos Kit played much with his swarthy little daughter, Adaline. Just what to do with her appeared to bother him. Oliver once noted him saying, in his soft voice, with broad accent of the South and the border mingled:

"I war raised without schooling; then I ran away an' I war twelve years on the trail an' in the mountains 'fore I came out to Bent's an' to Taos again. Now I'm thirty-two, an' without any education 'cept trapper education. 'Tisn't human for a man not to be able to read or write; an' what I'm to do with my leetle gal I don't know. But I want her to have education."

This seemed to Oliver rather a queer idea from the great Kit Carson, who could shoot and ride and trail and talk Indian talk and make Indian sign, besides speaking a rude Spanish and some French. Why should such a man care to read and write, or wish that his children should read and write? But Kit Carson had been much in earnest, nevertheless.

Now was it the late fall of 1841, and Oliver still was the official herder for the Carson company. However, he had grown very much during these twelve months in the fresh air, riding and tramping and doing man's work. Tough of muscle and sturdy of frame, he was becoming full-chested like Kit Carson himself. But he could not yet be called a trapper.

The men were kind to him; he liked them; he stood their joking and their rough ways, and tried to do what they told him was best to do. So they apparently liked him, in turn, and would teach him how to shoot quick and straight, and to ride easily and surely.

On this, an afternoon in the last week of November, he had been permitted by Lieutenant Ike Chamberlain (a stalwart six-footer was Ike, and a tremendous fighter, they all said) to take out upon herd Ike's favorite rifle—a heavy flint-lock, made by the celebrated gun-smith Hawkins, of St. Louis. It was taller than Oliver, and the long barrel was so heavy that he scarcely could hold it out; so when he shot it he rested it upon brush, or crossed sticks, or whatever else was handy. But the bullet sped true to the sight. "Plumb centre" shot a Hawkins rifle.

With the heavy rifle balanced across his lap, with buffalo-horn powder-flask and beaded hide bullet-pouch slung from his shoulders, and with broad, keen skinning-knife belted by hide belt at his right thigh, he was prepared to shoot rabbits. Obeying instructions of Ike and Sol and the other men, he had learned to

hit the rabbits only in the head. It was fairer to the rabbit, for the rabbit had more chance of escape by being missed. To hit a rabbit in the body was scorned by mountain-men, and was deemed careless, slovenly work.

Bearing thirteen rabbits shot each through the head by single ball from the flint-lock Hawkins mountain rifle, Oliver proudly drove the Carson "cavvy" home at evening. Laden like valiant hunter he trudged through the village, to exhibit his spoils—and to get his supper.

He found Taos stirred by excitement. Several strange teamsters were forming centres of little groups of listeners. These were Santa Fé caravan teamsters; they had sought Taos to report that between Taos and Santa Fé a band of Indians had stampeded fourteen span of their mules, and to ask help from the Kit Carson men.

At an unfortunate moment had the teamsters applied for the succor. Trappers were out upon the final fur hunt of the year; a buffalo hunt for Bent's Fort was in progress; Ike Chamberlain had ridden away that morning, upon errand bound; and Kit Carson was temporarily pallet-laid by reason of a pistol wound through the left leg. His new Colt's revolving pistol had fallen from his belt, and striking upon its hammer had discharged its ball diagonally through between knee and ankle.

As for the other men in Taos, they were slothful

Mexican loungers, not at all of a spirit to help the Americans fight the Indians. "Let the Americans do their own fighting," they said; "we want only to be let alone."

Kit Carson was much perturbed, half sitting, restlessly, on his couch of blankets and robes.

"What you got thar, boy?" he demanded.

"Rabbits. I shot every one in the head," informed Oliver.

"Let me see 'em."

Oliver brought in the bunch, and threw it down before Kit Carson, who explored it with his sound foot.

"Wall!" he mused, slowly. "A lad who can shoot like that needn't herd cavvy. It's time you went on the hunt. I'll put a Mexican at herding." Oliver's heart leaped gladly. Kit Carson fidgeted, ill at ease, and continued: "Now those teamsters have come in, expecting us to help 'em get back their stolen critters, an' I haven't got a single man to send out after the red rascals. An' hyar I'm laid up, myself! What do you think, boy? You know the country. Do you reckon you could take these fellows an' help 'em get back their critters, if I told you exactly whar to go?"

Oliver nodded. His eyes were big, his heart thumped in his throat so that at last he could only stammer:

"I'll try. I guess I could. I'll try."

"Wall," said Kit, still restless, "nobody can do

more than try. An' hyar's a chance for you at mountain-man work. 'Less I'm much mistaken, those red rascals air making straight for——" and he described to Oliver a well-known box-canyon or enclosed pocket, among the hills 150 miles westward. Oliver nodded; he had been that far, once, upon a little trip with Kit Carson, and he remembered the trail. "They'll take the critters thar an' hide 'em; an' now they won't be expecting pursuit. With everybody fresh mounted, if you leave right after eating this evening you ought to get thar to-morrow evening, so as to rush the camp in 'arly morning. Pick a good hoss out o' the cavvy, for yoreself. Fust go get something to eat. Thar come some o' the men; I'll tell 'em what we're to do."

Treading air and vastly excited, himself, Oliver sped away to make his preparations.

"Better fill yore powder flask, boy," called Kit, kindly. "Help yoreself from my horn, yonder. An' thar's the bullets. They fit Ike's gun. But don't shoot 'less you have to; an' if you do shoot, shoot as straight as if you war shooting rabbits. Remember, it air the bullets that hit that count."

"Yes, sir; I'll remember," engaged Oliver, working eagerly.

So presently into the twilight glow rode the dozen teamsters, armed and mounted as well as practicable. Two and two they rode: their bearded, booted, flannel-shirted captain, and ragged Oliver high on a yellow horse, side by side in the lead.

Through the twilight, and through the gloaming, and through the starry night, at trot broken by now and then a brief space of walk, westward rode the little cavalcade, to surprise the Apaches.

The dark blue sky gradually paled; paled the dusky earth; coyotes homeward slinked; little brown birds twittered amidst the brush; from the east spread upward a pink radiance; and stiff and chilled from the night's travel through the great open sage country, at rising of the sun the pursuit jogged into the first of the hill defiles.

As they rode, the horsemen ate; chewing at strips of dried buffalo meat.

Higher and more numerous waxed the hills, their long steep slopes covered with chaparral and stunted timber, and separated by bouldered water-courses, many of them dry. The trail seemed a blind one.

"Do ye know whar you're going, boy?" queried the teamster captain, doubtfully.

"Yes, sir. I've been in here before, and Kit Carson told me," answered Oliver, hard at work thinking, and peering keenly.

At noon they rested by a stream, and let the horses graze, and dozed, themselves, while down upon the wild maze of quiet wooded hills poured the generous sun—his beams hot in the thin atmosphere.

After their nooning, again they rode. The country had grown wilder; the hills had become peaks, snow-capped; the water-courses had cut deep gulches

and canyons. It was the favorite region of the Jicarilla (Heek-ah-ree-yah, *i.e.,* Basket) Apaches; the ancient volcano land of northern New Mexico west of the Rio Grande. Here the Jicarillas had their retreats.

Now the pursuit must ride more carefully, for Oliver was not certain but that they might be near the Indians. So they scanned every ridge to catch timely glimpse of Indian scout, and every hollow to catch glimpse of tell-tale smoke. An oddly-shaped little peak was the landmark; and as by way of draw and pass, from valley to valley, they neared it, Oliver's heart beat faster. Below the peak was that box-canyon or enclosed basin where, according to Kit Carson's judgment, the stolen stock would be hidden.

At last the wearied little cavalcade wound around a wooded shoulder and could scan the spot where lay the outlaw refuge. Up-wafted lazily, as from the basin itself, into the sunset atmosphere above the fringing trees and rocks, a film of hazy blue smoke. Indian camp!

However, too late was it, this day, to attack; darkness would interfere. So the pursuit rode nearer, and sent two men forward afoot to spy. They left; and they returned, scratched and grimy, in the dusk, to report that a Jicarilla camp was located in the basin, that the Indians were gorging and making merry around a fire, and that more than fourteen span of mules, evidently stolen, were grazing freely, hobbled

not nor tethered, upon the grass of the secluded niche. Having driven their spoil 150 miles into the heart of the Apache mountains, the Indians evidently were expecting no interference.

And here, likewise 150 miles from white settlement, the pursuit grimly squatted down to a fireless night and a long wait until dawn. They slept at intervals; even Oliver slept, exultant though he was at having led true, and anxious though he was for further results.

The dawn grayed; the men stiffly stirred about, saddling their hunched horses and priming afresh their weapons.

"Let the boy show the trail," bade the teamster leader, gruffly. "He's been hyar'bouts before, he says."

Oliver was nothing loth; Kit Carson had told him exactly where to strike the one entrance into the basin —the one entrance which also was the one exit. Therefore, carrying the Ike Chamberlain rifle in approved fashion in hollow of left arm, ready, Oliver forced his yellow horse into the advance.

"When we charge, everybody yell 'Kit Carson! Kit Carson!'" he proposed, huskily. "When they hear that they'll run, sure. They're afraid of Kit Carson."

The teamster leader gravely nodded; and down the dim file, following the yellow horse, was passed the word: "Yell 'Kit Carson'!"

OLIVER WINS HIS SPURS

The mist of dawn enveloped the world, and lay moist upon twig and leaf. In silence the single file threaded the pines; the moist carpeting of needles gave no sound. Into a gravelly draw through which ran a newly hoof-cut trail they rode; boulders closed about them; a stream flowed past for the outer country; they quickened their pace to a trot; and, every rifle poised, at a gallop they poured through the narrow entrance and charged across the open park inside.

"Kit Carson! Kit Carson!" shrilled little Oliver, excitedly hammering with his moccasined heels the flanks of his yellow horse.

"Kit Carson! Kit Carson!" welled hoarsely the chorus behind him.

Barked Apache dogs; snorted Apache pony and stolen mule, stampeding here and there in the grayness. Spreading, on left and right, the charging teamsters overtook Oliver. Before, recumbent figures around the smouldering fires had up-leaped, throwing off blankets and robes, seizing weapons, hesitating, to discharge hasty bullet or arrow, and at thud of hoof, crack of rifle, and that terrible cry, "Kit Carson! Kit Carson!" half-naked to flee, through the grayness—scurrying across the level and scrambling amidst the rocky walls.

"Whang!" spoke Oliver's Ike Chamberlain rifle—its butt half-way to his shoulder, its heavy muzzle pointed out in the general direction of the rout.

And "Whang!" "Bang!" spoke the pieces of the teamsters.

Fleeing figures pitched headlong to the dewy sward; from amidst the rocks of the crumbling, sheer walls, where, at bay, they vainly answered with shot and yell, others pitched headlong, or sank back, to be still. While two or three of their number guarded the exit, that the ponies and mules might not escape, the teamsters charged on, searching the rocks with rifle and pistol; and not an Indian of the eighteen thieving warriors was left alive.

But young Oliver found that this was very different from shooting at rabbits; and in after days he never was certain whether he had killed all—or none. However, he fired only the one shot; and at the close of the battle he still was trying to reload!

In the sunrise, with eighteen ponies bearing Apache brands or ear-marks, and with thirty-five mules and horses bearing trader or trapper brands or ear-marks, the triumphant little cavalcade rode out from the trampled strong-hold, upon trail for Taos. Sharing with the teamster leader the advance, Oliver sat proudly his yellow horse. He had earned his place.

At the close of the second day they entered Taos. Summoned by the great clatter of hoofs and the loud volley of triumphant whoops, the villagers cheered.

"Buen' muchacho!" praised the natives, calling to Oliver: "Good boy!"

And Oliver passed on, to share in the report by the teamster captain at the house of Kit Carson.

Kit Carson said little, but his blue-gray eyes brightened.

"Wall, I reckoned you'd find 'em thar," he said, from his couch against the wall. "Hyar, boy; fetch me that gun yonder."

Oliver brought over to him, from the corner, the weapon. Kit Carson handed it back to him.

"Take it. It's yores," he said. "Now you're a mountain-man, an' what's a mountain-man without a rifle? You're a mountain-man an' a Kit Carson man, an' it's 'bout time you went on the trap trail. But," he added, with a twinkle, noting Oliver's confusion, "you'll have time to eat, fust, an' sleep."

Clutching his treasure, and crowded with thanks which he could not utter yet, Oliver staggered away.

Kit Carson's rifle! Kit Carson's own rifle! A rifle better than even Ike Chamberlain's; for Ike's was a flint-lock, whereas this, scarce a year old, was of the convenient new percussion-cap invention, and had cost sixty dollars, gold. Moreover, in the stock were nineteen brass-headed tacks, stuck there by Kit Carson, and each counting as an Indian scalp!

IV

WORD FROM OLD FORT LARAMIE

SPRING and the beaver-hunt season opened. The whole Carson company organized for a trip far to the north. Oliver was apportioned his dozen traps, and his name was upon the pay-roll. The company left early in March; but Ike Chamberlain was in charge, for Kit Carson had astonished them all by announcing that he was going to the States.

"It's time my little gal had education," he said, quietly. "Touse or Bent's air no place for her, or Santy Fee either, an' I'm no fit person to raise her. I've got kin back thar in Missouri, an' maybe I can put her with some o' them, so she'll grow up with white people an' learn civilized ways."

"Have you been back thar since you come out, Kit?" asked somebody.

Carson shook his head.

"Nope," he said; "in the sixteen years the only settlements I've seen air trading posts o' plains an' mountains, an' Touse an' Santy Fee. I war a boy when in fall o' Twenty-six I left home. Ought to have gone back, but didn't. They say now Missouri's

grown a heap, an' I won't know Franklin town, an' thar's so many other towns I'll be lost."

"Independence air the outfit point o' the Santy Fee caravans, now," observed Ike Chamberlain—a fact that all knew. "Franklin air too far down-river. An' thar's a new movement on—to Oregon in the Northwest country; starts from the Missouri at Independence same as Santy Fee trade does. Those missionaries who went out to the lower Columbia, over the South Pass an' the Snake River trail, in Thirty-four an' after, have been making big talks through the States, 'bout how Oregon air the place for 'Merican farmers 'stead o' British fur-hunters, an' Congress has been argufying, an' Lu has jest heard from some o' his folks that thar's a regular movement afoot this spring to send a big wagon-train o' settlers out by the Platte an' Laramie trail, over South Pass an' clear through to the Columbia. Isn't that so, Lu?"

Lucien Maxwell nodded. He was a dark, broad-shouldered young man, about twenty-three, and a favorite of Kit Carson's. He was not in the Carson company, exactly, but was a trader with the Indians and for the Bent, St. Vrain & Co., on the Santa Fé Trail and between Bent's Fort and Fort St. Vrain. He was much at Taos, where he had just married the Señorita Luz Beaubien, daughter of Charles Beaubien, one of Taos' most cultured residents. As Maxwell was much upon the trader trail to the States, and as he

lived, or at least his parents lived, at old Kaskaskia, Illinois, below St. Louis, he carried much news.

"Yes," he answered. "I've a letter and a newspaper from home that say that Doctor White—Elijah White, who's been missionary doctor in Oregon; you fellows have heard him—has been appointed Indian agent for the United States in Oregon; and when he goes out this spring a lot of settlers are going, too, so as to have him take 'em through."

"Wagh!" grunted an old trapper. "Fat doings for Injuns! Thar'll be hosses to steal an' ha'r to lift, I'm thinking. Sioux an' Blackfeet air half-froze for jest sech a caravan o' greenhorns on a trail 'crost continent. Wagh! This chile'd rather go it alone."

"Thar ought to be a line o' posts from the Missouri clear to the mountains, all 'long the trail; an' over across, too, if folks from the States air going to travel it," declared Chamberlain.

"That ees so. Dose Injuns, dey get mad when dey see so many whites in buffalo country; an' dose Britishers in Oregon, dey jus' as soon Americans stay on dees side Rocky Mountains," agreed Mariano, Mexican trapper.

"Well, this paper has a message in it from Washington, and there's talk of a government expedition going out over the trail this very spring, to survey it and maybe see what can be done," informed Maxwell.

"Wagh!" grunted the old trapper. "Hyar's a coon that doesn't need ary government expedition

to show *him* the trail. He travelled it with Ashley in Twenty-four, he did; an' he war over the South Pass an' into the Green River country t'other side, an' he's trapped through to the Columbia an' Vancouver, an' to Californy, too. Can't tell mountain-men 'bout the way to Oregon."

"Yep; an' those missionary women crossed through in Thirty-six, an' more in Thirty-eight," chimed in another. "That broke the trail to the Oregon country, sure."

"Seems to me the government must be planning a line of forts, and the expedition will spy out and report on that," remarked Maxwell. "Like as not an army man will lead it."

"Oregon country air a fine country," asserted somebody. "Think o' trying it, myself. 'Most went thar as settler when Joe Meek an' Doc Newell an' others took the Columbia Trail after last rendezvous in Thirty-nine."

"Trés-belle, ess eet. I hear so from my cousin, who leeve in la valle Weellamette. He was Hudson Bay man, trapper; now he farmer," volunteered Henri Menard, French-Canadian of St. Louis.

Such was the talk following upon Kit Carson's quiet announcement that he would go back this spring by early caravan to Missouri, and there leave his little half-Indian Adaline, to give her the schooling which he had missed. And Lucien Maxwell said he

" guessed " that he would go, too, and visit his parents and other relatives at Kaskaskia.

For the remainder of the company, north led the trapper trail: from old Taos up through the mountains of central Colorado, into the South Park, thence on over by wild passes into the Middle Park. They set their beaver traps in the side streams of the Grand River. It seemed best not to go on further, for Indian trouble was rumored.

This was Ute country, and the friendly dark Utes with their squaws followed the camps—the squaws skinning the beaver and asking only the carcass or a pinch of sugar, the bucks gorging and trading. Deer meat, elk meat, buffalo meat, and delicious roast beaver-tail which looked like thick gelatin and tasted like saltless pig's-feet, was the camp menu. It was a very pleasant trapping trip.

About June 1, with eighteen packs of beaver, otter, and martin pelts—each beaver or otter bale containing eighty skins—half the company, led by Ike Chamberlain, rode out for Taos; the others stayed in, to rest and " make meat " and repair equipment, until opened the fall fur hunt. In the homeward travelling company was Oliver, now a seasoned trapper as well as an accepted " Carson man."

Old Taos had not changed in the three months. Only, Kit Carson had gone, as promised, to the States. He had caught the first of the Bent, St. Vrain & Co. goods caravans out of Bent's Fort for Missouri, five

hundred and more miles, to put Adaline where she would get some education. Lucien Maxwell had gone, too.

"Wall, Kit won't stay long," drawled Ike—his first remark after hearing the facts. "He'll find things are different; the frontier's grown up with people, an' he'll feel lonesome, 'mongst 'em. He'll be coming back to Touse, right soon."

Indeed, according to opinion 'twas time for his return already; and in mid-afternoon of the day after their own arrival, Oliver, upon the front porch of the Carson house, his attention attracted to a bustle and to the hurrying figure of Ike, thought that Kit might be in town or at least at Bent's Fort. Through the plaza hastened tall Ike; straight-footed, slightly bow-legged, carrying, as customary, his long rifle.

"Get yore outfit ready for the trail ag'in," he bade, quickly, with scarce a pause. "Word from Kit says to meet him at Fort Laramie, pronto! Leave to-morrow."

"All right," answered Oliver, astonished, but knowing better than to delay Ike for foolish questions.

Still, this was most sudden and unexpected. What was Kit Carson doing up at Fort Laramie, on the Oregon Trail, when he should have been at Bent's Fort, on the Santa Fé Trail? Oliver set out after information.

The first of the company whom he encountered was

Mariano Medino, the Mexican, squatting and filling a powder-horn in a doorway.

"Ike has seen you?" queried Mariano.

"Yes. What's news?"

"Ah, that Keet Carson, he say 'Come to Laramie,' an' we come. That all I know," answered Mariano, busily.

"Who brought the word?"

"Dos (two) Injuns. See? Over there," directed Mariano, with nod of head.

Oliver looked, and noted a little knot of townspeople—mainly Mexicans, shoulders and heads shrouded in serapes or native blankets—standing before the Bent, St. Vrain & Co. local warehouse and gazing at the doorway. So across the plaza he trudged.

The knot was scrutinizing, without much comment, two Indians who leaned, stolid and unaffected and haughty, against the doorway posts. They were Indians of lighter coppery complexion than the Kiowas or the Apaches or the Utes; they were as light as a Cheyenne, and one had a scraggly moustache of black hairs. By this, and by the beading of their shirts and the shape of their moccasins, Oliver (a mountain-man) knew them to be Indians of a strange tribe. A voice at his elbow interrupted his examination.

"Those are Delawares, boy." It was Bill Williams who spoke—Bill Williams, sometimes called "Preacher" Williams; not a Carson man, but an odd old trapper who from his lone trail occasionally ap-

peared in Taos. "Eastern Injuns they be, who war moved by the government into the Injun country 'long the Missouri frontier. Big hunters an' fighters, but don't often get to the mountains."

"Are they the express from Kit?"

"They are the runners from Kit. Sent 'em from the mouth o' the Kaw, or Kansas Landing 'bove Independence. Understand they came through, the seven hundred miles, in 'leven days, which is good travel."

So it was; and evidently, therefore, the message from Carson for his men to meet him at Fort Laramie was urgent. And little time could be spent preparing; none could be wasted; for as everybody knew, Fort Laramie was four hundred miles from Bent's Fort, and Bent's Fort was two hundred and fifty miles from Taos.

Now must the Kit Carson men at Taos fall to, making ready. Bullets must be moulded, powder-horns replenished, repairs put upon saddle and shirt and leggins, new moccasins found or the old ones soled again. Nobody might tell whither this next trail led, nor how long ere it would turn home; and few cared, even though they had just come in from another trail of three months.

Two men were sent back to the summer camp to tell the Sol Silver party what had happened; three were assigned to see the bales of pelts through to market at St. Louis; and before noon of the following day the rest, fifteen of them, under Lieutenant Ike,

with plenty of horses and mules for saddle and pack, clattered out of Taos, bound straight for Fort Laramie, more than six hundred miles away.

Riding northward, on the sixth day the hurrying squad emerged in sight of Bent's Fort, above whose brown, high walls flew the Stars and Stripes: a token and a challenge, planted here on the farthest border where the United States met Mexico.

Fording the Arkansas, in this the southeastern part of present Colorado, the Carson men were in American territory. Swarthy William Bent, proprietor, who lived at the fort, and whose wife was a Cheyenne woman, welcomed them into the broad gateway.

Mr. Bent was enabled to supply a little news.

"Why, yes, there's a lot of talk this spring of emigration to the Oregon country," he said; "reports from Missouri are, that some one hundred settlers, including women and children, left, middle of May, over the trail for Oregon. And a government expedition's afoot. Maxwell's been hired for it. Like as not you'll find Kit's mixed up in some of that business, too."

From Bent's, with its brave flag, its brass cannon piece upon the wall, and its sturdy garrison, on pushed the squad.

Two hundred miles more they rode, until, where green foothills met green plains, under the eye of Long's Peak, was stationed, as Oliver well knew, Fort St. Vrain, brother post to Bent's. He was wondering

whether Ike was not intending to swing into the west and visit this post, when, like the others, he sighted a horseman approaching at a gallop.

"Injuns!" cried voices in the cavalcade.

"White man, I reckon," cried others.

"Close up, close up," ordered Lieutenant Ike, gruffly. "An' keep yore eyes peeled for more."

Rapidly the horseman approached. Nearer he drew, speeding recklessly, his pony now and then jumping to avoid a badger hole or prairie-dog hole. Presently could be descried his long hair and a 'kerchief turban streaming in the breeze that he made; above his head he flourished his rifle—its muzzle puffed smoke, as signal that he was a friend and was coming with empty gun.

"White!" grunted several voices, simultaneously.

"Wagh!" uttered another. "Not exactly, boys. If that airn't Jim Beckwith, I'm a beaver!"

Jim Beckwith! Oliver knew Jim Beckwith—or Beckwourth, as he called himself—and had seen him in Taos. He was a mixed blood, half French and half negro, and was celebrated because, when early a trapper, he had been adopted by the Crow Indians and made a head war-chief.

Arriving, while jogged the squad, he halted his pony by pulling it to its haunches. A romantic figure he was, with head bare, Indian fashion, with dark, handsome, almost Indian features, his sinewy, grace-

ful frame sheathed in gaily fringed and beaded buckskin.

"How," he greeted.

"How," and "Hello, Jim," greeted the squad.

"From Touse?"

"Yep."

"Where bound?"

"Up to Fort John."

"What's the news?"

"Nothing much. Kit sent for us, is all."

"Wants you on that expedition."

"What expedition?"

"Government."

"How'd you know?"

"'Cause part of it's just passed on up through St. Vrain. I was there and saw it. Young army fellow by name of Frémont's captain, and he said Carson and rest of the crowd are waiting at Laramie. Maxwell was along, too, and he said same. Maxwell's hunter, Kit's guide. Kit took one party up by way the North Platte trail, Frémont and Maxwell came in 'cross country by South Platte. They're all to meet at Fort John or Laramie."

"Heap doings," muttered Lieutenant Ike. "What's the lodge talk?" he asked.

"Oregon trail's being broken by settlers. First company's already passed Laramie. Sioux are bad, and Gros Vents and Cheyennes have joined 'em, for war-path up Sweetwater. They're hot for Crow and

white scalps, and Snake hosses. You fellows are liable to lose ha'r."

"Wagh! But what's this hyar expedition for?"

"To make the trail wider. To tell the government at Washington where South Pass is, near as I could find out from Maxwell."

"But who doesn't know whar South Pass air!" exclaimed a chorus.

"Wall," quoth Lieutenant Ike, "if we've all been thar once we can all go thar ag'in. Kit's sent for us, an' that's 'nough. Come on, boys."

V

FRÉMONT SAYS "ONWARD!"

"THAR'S Fort John," directed Oliver's trail comrade, William New.

This was the fourth day after the meeting with Jim Beckwith; the march had been steadily northward, with snowy mountains distant on the left, and with far bleak ridges showing ever more clear, in the north.

"Thar's Fort John," directed William New. "Those mountains beyond it are the Black Hills, whar the Sioux an' Cheyenne cache themselves."

"Is that the same as Fort Laramie?" asked Oliver.

"Yep. That beaver has two tails, is all. John war what the Company (and by this Oliver knew that he meant the great American Fur Company) named it, an' that's what most o' us old trappers call it; but 'Laramie' is the general name 'mongst traders, an' some trappers too. You see, it's on Laramie Fork o' the North Platte, an' that peak over it is Laramie Peak, so 'Laramie' 's a natteral word."

While still riding northward as if to pass by Fort Laramie on the other side of Laramie Creek, the squad encountered a plain trail, almost a road, running east

and west; and into this turned at once Lieutenant Ike and fellow leader. Therefore turned into it all, as matter of course.

"Hyar's yore way to Oregon," announced William New, for benefit of Oliver. "But thar's been a heap o' people passed along since a year ago. Wagh, thar has! Sign's fresh, too—people, wagons an' cattle!"

"An' thar's whar we find Kit, I reckon," spoke a horseman of the pair in front, nodding before.

"Yes; an' Injuns, too," added his comrade. "'Drather find 'em thar than on ahead."

"See those lodges?" directed William New, to Oliver. "Sioux lodges. Few Cheyenne, but mostly Sioux—Ogalallah."

Before, beyond the sparse willows and cottonwood of the creek, stood forth boldly upon a little knoll the post of Fort Laramie or Fort John. The walls were of adobe clay, like the walls of Bent's Fort, but white-washed, after Mexican fashion, like many of the houses in Taos. The fort had towers, at diagonal corners, square and peaked; and over the principal gateway was another tower or sentry-box, floating the Stars and Stripes. Along the tops of the walls stood, like teeth, a row of palisades. Close beside the walls and below the post were a collection of conical white tents—evidently Indian lodges of tanned buffalo hides.

Many figures were strolling about: figures in buckskins and wool, as well as figures in blankets and robes.

"Thar's Kit, or else this chile's eyes don't know

fat cow from pore bull!" exclaimed a voice. "An' thar's more of 'em camped nigh the river, up above!"

Through the ford, where had crossed the wheels and hoofs of preceding companies, plashed the squad, at trot; at gallop mounted the rise which waited; and with trapper whoop and Indian yelp, and "Whang!" of sundry rifle, charged for the gate of old Laramie.

The Indians, blanketed to their chins, stoically stared; from the walls and from the gateway the post employés witnessed, unperturbed, for they were accustomed to such arrival; a few other trappers, lounging about, whooped back, with wave of hand; and a wiry, sandy, short-legged, broad-shouldered little man, vaulting upon a horse, dashed out, full speed for the short distance, hat-brim flaring, hair and fringes streaming, to meet the incomers.

"Told 'ee it war Kit! Rides like an Injun!" chuckled the previous speaker.

"Hello, Kit."

"Hello, boys." He checked his horse as quickly as he had started it. "Glad to see ye. Thar's our camp, up above."

"Wall, got yore express, an' hyar we air," volunteered Ike, as all rode on. "What's the news?"

"Government expedition to the South Pass; maybe further. Lieutenant Frémont, army man, is boss; Maxwell's hunter, I'm guide. The lieutenant's got twenty or so fust-class St. Louis Frenchmen hired for the trip, but seemed to me I'd feel more comfortable

JOHN CHARLES FRÉMONT

if I had some o' my own crowd. So I sent those two Delawares to Touse, with the word."

As they were about to pass the post another horseman spurred out, intercepting them. The fact that this was the "army man," government "boss" of the expedition, was impressed upon the cavalcade, and all eyes turned to scrutinize the rider as he approached.

He rode well and easily—but with somewhat longer stirrup than the short Indian-hung stirrup of the Carson men, and sitting rather more erect than was trapper custom. His costume bore scarce a trace of army uniform; he wore a short plain blue blouse, half unbuttoned, over blue flannel shirt and ordinary jean trousers tucked into high moccasins, while his head-gear was the broad curly-brimmed wool hat of the plains and mountains. He carried no sword. However, athwart his saddle-horn was lying the inevitable rifle. His figure was more slender than Kit Carson's; he was about two inches taller, and evidently he weighed about the same. He had a full brown beard, rather compact and wavy, oval face, white skin now tanned, bold clean-cut nose jutting like the keel of a boat, and large eyes of flashing blue. He was not any older than Kit, much handsomer, altogether a different style of man—more excitable, more dashing, more like Kit was in an Indian fight. Yes, here was another type of leader.

"Got your men, I see," he addressed, reining in, with a rapid glance along the column.

"Yep," drawled Kit. "Hyar they are."

"And one boy, too," added the lieutenant, with a smile at Oliver. "That will make my boys envious."

"Wall," remarked Kit, "he's man an' on the pay-roll. 'Tisn't size that counts, always."

The camp was close ahead. It consisted of about a dozen small cone-shaped tents of dingy canvas; one tent, slightly larger than the others, and set apart, probably was Lieutenant Frémont's tent. The camp was thronging with whites in frontier costume, with Indians and dogs; saddles and packs were stacked in piles; and out from the creek bank, in a grassy place, were grazing horses and mules.

From the camp now came racing, like young Indians, upon their ponies, two boys, as if eager to inspect. One was younger than Oliver, the other was older. They, also, were dressed in easy but rough plains costume, and the younger even wore Cheyenne moccasins. With brief "Hello" they fell in alongside the leaders of the column, and accompanied it while covertly eyeing its make-up. Oliver assumed his best mountain-man pose, and with equal sly curiosity eyed them back.

"No, my men will mess by themselves," was saying Kit Carson, to Lieutenant Frémont. "O' course, thar can be a general camp, but they'll make their own way. That'll avoid any trouble."

"Very well," answered Lieutenant Frémont.

"That's understood, then. I don't feel authorized to enlist them."

To the camp rode on the Carson squad; and at the lifted hand of Kit, as signal, they were off saddle at once, to unpack and make another camp—an extension of first. While Oliver was busy, a voice spoke to him.

"Your name's Oliver, Kit says." It was Lieutenant Frémont, accosting him with another frank smile; the two boys, bridle-lines upon arms, were with him. "I want you young gentlemen to get acquainted. Oliver, this is Henry Brant, and Randolph Benton, of St. Louis. They came out by the North Platte trail, with Kit's party."

Oliver flushed, as he shook hands.

"Are you going all the way?" asked Randolph, eagerly. He was the younger boy, with the Cheyenne moccasins; his age was about twelve.

"I don't know. We go as far as Kit goes, I guess."

"That's all the way, then. You aren't afraid of Indians, are you?"

"Naw," grunted Oliver, disdainfully.

"We aren't, either," declared the older boy, Henry. He was about nineteen. And he continued, gloomily: "But we can't go on. We've got to stay here at the fort, Mr. Frémont says."

"A Cheyenne boy gave me these moccasins," informed Randolph, proudly, sticking out a foot.

"Yes. I knew 'em for Cheyenne moccasins, soon as I saw 'em," answered Oliver. "But why don't you go on?" he invited—liking both boys. "Isn't the party going on?"

"Yes; but we're too inexperienced, Mr. Frémont thinks. And he doesn't want to have the responsibility of us," explained Henry; continuing, gloomily as before: "*We'd* go, if he'd let us; but if the Indians are bad I suppose we might be in the way, and I'd rather stay here than get anybody killed looking after us."

"So would I," agreed Randolph, quickly. He was the livelier of the two. "We almost had a fight, coming out, anyhow; only they turned into trappers instead of Indians."

"We'll have some fun, at the fort, I guess," said Henry, more hopefully. "But you finish up your work, Oliver. We'll watch you."

"Well," admitted Oliver. "I'll be done in a minute."

He proceeded; his two friends strolled about, keeping in touch with him.

The Frémont party were composed all of St. Louis French—the majority seasoned voyageurs and trappers who as American Fur Company men had before met the Carson men on the beaver trail. They wore, some buckskins, but the greater proportion baggy jean trousers stuffed into high moccasins or boots, and belted at the waist, flannel shirts adjusted outside the

trousers, like blanket-coats and trimmed in red, bright neckerchiefs, and handkerchief turbans or the wool hats. A cheery, bustling, dark-faced and dark-eyed crowd they were, laughing much and singing much and joking much.

"Let's go down to the fort," proposed Randolph, at once, when Oliver turned from his last chore.

But the sun was setting behind great Laramie Peak of the Black Hills, in the west; throughout the combined camps fires were blazing; and Oliver, keenly aware of time and place, must reply:

"No; this chile's wolfish, and pots are on the fire. Meat, first. Then I'll go."

"You eat with us, at our mess," invited Henry.

"Yes. You can, can't you?" urged Randolph. "Buffalo meat, and coffee!"

"I suppose you're used to buffalo meat, though," hazarded Henry, as they moved on.

"Yes. That's what we live on, mostly. Don't have much coffee. Didn't bring any, this trip."

"We lost nearly all of ours—a whole bag full, in the Kansas River!" chirped Randolph. "Almost as soon as we'd started. Our rubber boat tipped over when we were crossing, and Kit Carson and Mr. Maxwell and everybody had to jump into the river and rescue things. Some of the men couldn't swim, either; but they didn't care! Kit Carson was sick two days from his wetting."

"He's often been in rivers. Trappers wade to

their waist in ice-water, setting traps or finding 'em," explained Oliver.

"Are you a trapper?"

"I'm learning," answered Oliver, cautiously. And he added, with pride: "I'm a Kit Carson man, though."

"Do those tacks in your rifle mean scalps?"

"Yes."

"Did you take them?"

"No; but Kit Carson did, before he gave the rifle to me. It was his rifle."

"I'd like to be a Kit Carson man," declared Henry.

"I'd as soon be a Frémont man," retorted Randolph, loyally.

"Well, it takes pluck to follow either of them, I guess," admitted Henry. "They're both brave. You ought to have seen them riding after buffalo! Kit Carson's horse put his foot in a hole and threw him head over heels and ran away with the buffalo till Mr. Maxwell caught him; and the lieutenant's horse chased so hard and got so excited that it regularly foamed at the mouth! It's a trained buffalo horse; name is Proveau."

They squatted, trapper fashion, guns against knees, near a fire upon which a pot of stew bubbled and steamed attractively. At other fires men were toasting strips of meat held on sticks.

"You came up from Taos, didn't you?" asked Henry.

"Yes."

"We came clear from St. Louis. That's about as far," piped Randolph. "But I came from Washington, too. We left Missouri—or Mr. Chouteau's farm just this side, the tenth of June and we got here July thirteenth. We've been here a week."

"Did you have any scrimmages, on the trail?" queried Oliver.

"Naw," said Henry. "Once we thought we were going to, but they were just a band of trappers on their way back to Missouri. We had some fine buffalo hunts, though. But Lieutenant Frémont almost got into a big Indian fight. He separated from us, part way; and he and Mr. Maxwell and a couple of others followed up the South Branch of the Platte River to the mountains, while we took the Oregon Trail route, up the North Branch."

"Yes; and about three hundred Injuns charged *them,* and there'd have been shooting if Mr. Maxwell hadn't recognized one of the Injuns and shouted, just in time: 'You old fool! Don't you know me?' Then they all shook hands, and went to the Indian village. They were Arapahoe Indians."

"What's this expedition for, anyway?" ventured Oliver.

"I'll tell you," proffered Randolph. "I know because Lieutenant Frémont married my sister——"

"And his father's Senator Benton of Missouri, too," further explained Henry. "We're second

cousins. That's why we were taken along, I guess."

"Well, I've heard the talk, at our house in Washington, anyway," resumed Randolph, interrupted. "It's claimed to be an army expedition sent out by the Secretary of War to examine the country between the Missouri frontiers and the Rocky Mountains, and to get the latitude and longitude of the South Pass; but my father and some other men in Congress hope it will encourage colonists over into Oregon by describing the way to get there."

"Have you been to the South Pass?" asked Henry, of Oliver.

"No, not yet; but most of our men have. That's the big pass on the regular trapper and trader trail, over the Rockies from this side to the other side. Everybody knows the South Pass."

"Wish we were going on," repeated Henry, wistfully. "But I guess it's mighty serious when Kit Carson makes his will."

"Did he?"

"Yes. You see, our party met a party under Jim Bridger—you know Jim Bridger, another trapper captain? (Oliver nodded.) And they all said the country beyond Laramie isn't safe, because the Sioux swear they'll kill every white man they find there. That scared our men pretty bad, and Kit Carson got alarmed, too; and at the fort he made his will, so that in case he's killed his little girl he left in St. Louis at school will be provided for. She's half Indian."

"Well, he'll go on, though, if Frémont goes on," asserted Oliver, stoutly.

"Of course. That's why he made his will. He's sensible. It isn't because he's afraid."

When supper was practically over with, and the men had lighted their pipes for a few minutes preceding night chores, a figure stepped into the midst of the lounging groups and lifted his arm, for attention. It was a slender, quick figure—that of Lieutenant Frémont.

"Men," he addressed, clearly, "to-morrow we break camp, for the outward trail again. We're well armed, we know how to take care of ourselves, in a fight, and Mr. Bissonette, head agent at Fort Platte, has agreed to go with us, as far as we need him, as interpreter. He is a friend of the Sioux and Blackfeet, and can talk with them if we meet them. But as to these threats by the Indians and these rumors of danger, you know as well as I do how much they can be relied upon. You've all been in the Indian country before; you can't expect to travel in it and not risk a fight or two. In fact, you knew it before we left St. Louis. You knew there that the Sioux and Blackfeet were unsettled, in the Laramie region. I'm going on, right on, ready for peace or war. I don't see any good and sufficient reason why any of you should break your engagement with the government and me; but I don't want anybody in my party who feels afraid or repents of his bargain. Let him step forward at

once, and I'll release him with his discharge and his pay up to date."

There was an instant of silence, broken by a laugh as one man arose, and defiantly stood.

"You wish to stay, do you?" demanded Lieutenant Frémont.

The man nodded.

"Are you sick, perhaps?"

"No."

"Tired, then."

"Yes."

"You did not know that the South Pass was beyond Fort John, I presume!" pursued the lieutenant, sarcastically—creating another laugh.

The man maintained sulky silence, hanging his head.

"Well, my poor fellow, we are very sorry for you," continued the officer. "You are welcome to your pay and discharge, and you can be making garden at the post so as to have nice vegetables ready for us when we come back!" Thus having ridiculed him, the lieutenant asked, generally: "Is there anybody else who is tired in heart or feet?"

None answered—for which Oliver was glad.

"Humph!" criticised Randolph, as the three boys trudged off to visit the post. "Wish now they'd take us instead. But they won't. I've got to stay and wind the old chronometers every day!"

The next morning Oliver (accompanied by the en-

vious and disconsolate Henry and Randolph) was paying another visit to the fort. Lieutenant Frémont, and Kit Carson and Lucien Maxwell and several of the French trappers in the Frémont company had entered the office of Mr. Boudeau, the agent, as if to say good-by; when through the gate and across the court, for the office, stalked, with great dignity, half a dozen Sioux—all chiefs. They were finely built men, several of them old.

A clerk at the door of the office would wave them away; but they acted as if they did not see him, and past him they shouldered, and on in.

"Come on!" whispered Randolph, to his comrades. "There's something up. They're from Fort Platte, at the Platte River a mile below. I've seen 'em there."

So, the way apparently being open, in after the Indians sidled the boys.

Lieutenant Frémont was just opening a folded note, evidently brought by the Indians. They had seated themselves upon the floor, along the wall, and were waiting for the result. The white men were eyeing the missive anxiously, and waiting also.

"This is a note from Mr. Bissonette at Fort Platte," announced Lieutenant Frémont; "as follows," and he read, in French. Then he continued: "In case some of us may not have understood it all, I'll translate." And again he read—flushing more as he proceeded:

"FORT PLATTE, July 1, 1842.

"Mr. Frémont: The chiefs in council have just told me to warn you not to set out before the party of young men which is out shall have returned. Moreover, they tell me that they are very certain that they (the young men) will fire upon you at the first meeting. They ought to be back in seven to eight days. Pardon me for thus addressing you, but it seems to me that I should warn you of the danger. Furthermore, the chiefs who forbid you to set forth before the return of the warriors are the bearers of this note.

"I am your obedient servant,

"JOSEPH BISSONETTE,
"by L. B. CHARTRAIN.

"The names of some of the chiefs—The Otter Hat, the Breaker of Arrows, the Black Night, the Bull's Tail."

As the lieutenant finished, one of the seated chiefs arose, and dropping his blanket, as signal that he was about to speak, in guttural tone, with now and then a gesture, delivered a short harangue. Mr. Boudeau, the American Fur Company agent in charge of the post, translated sentence by sentence.

"You have come among us at a bad time," said the chief. "Some of our people have been killed, and our young men who have gone to the mountains are eager to avenge the blood of their relations, which has been shed by the whites. Our young men are bad, and if they meet you, they will believe that you are carrying goods and ammunition to their enemies, and will fire upon you. You have told us that this will make

war. We know that our great father has many soldiers and big guns, and we are anxious to keep our lives. We love the whites, and are desirous of peace. Thinking all these things, we have decided to keep you here until our warriors return. We are glad to see you among us. Our father is rich and we expected that you would have brought us presents from him—horses and guns and blankets. But we are glad to see you, anyway. We look upon your coming as the light that goes before the sun; for you will tell our great father that you have seen us, and how we are naked and poor and have nothing to eat, and he will send us all these things."

The chief sat down, and enveloped himself in his red blanket. Another chief, doffing his blanket (which was blue trimmed with red), standing also spoke. He said, like the first, that they loved the whites very much, and could not bear to have them injured when they came as friends, and that it was better for them to stay safely at the post and not go on. Then the great father at Washington would be grateful and would give his red children many blankets and horses and much food and powder and lead!

Other chiefs spoke, in turn—and all blandly expressed the hope that in reward for their tender care of the expedition in forbidding it to proceed, the "great father" at Washington would liberally reward them!

When the half circle of chiefs had said their say,

Lieutenant Frémont replied—Agent Boudeau translating his sentences into Sioux.

"We thank you for your good words," replied the lieutenant, to their up-turned solemn visages. "We know that you do not wish us to be harmed, and it will please the great father at Washington to hear about it. We should like to stay with you a long time, but the trail is waiting, we have not come to the end of it. We hope that your young men will not take us as enemies. That would be a great pity, when we come as friends. But in case that your young men might not see plainly, and blood would be shed, and perhaps many of them killed, we ask that two or three of you go with us, to signal the young men and tell them that we are friends. We ask that you go with us, as our guests, to spread your robes in my lodge and eat at my fire; and when we return safely I will give presents."

The chief in the red blanket arose.

"We have heard the speech of the white chief, and it is good," he said. "But we are old and poor and tired, and we cannot travel far on horseback. We must sit in our lodges and smoke our pipes among the women, and let our young warriors take the trail. Besides, we have no power now over the young men, and it would be bad for us if we tried to interfere on the war-path."

He seated himself, and was applauded by a chorus of grunts from his comrades.

Lieutenant Frémont answered, instantly and ener-

getically—with a glance at Kit Carson as if to read approval in his sober face.

"You say that you love the whites; why have you killed so many already this spring? You say you love the whites, and you are full of words about friendship; but you are unwilling to undergo the fatigue of a few days' ride to save our lives! We do not believe what you have said; we will listen to you no more. Whatever a chief among us tells his soldiers to do, is done. We obey our chiefs. We are soldiers of the great chief your father. He has told us to come out here, and see this country and all the Indians, his children. Why should we not go on and do it? Before we came, we heard that you had killed his people and wanted to be his children no longer; but we came anyway, holding out our hands in peace. Now we find that the stories we heard are not lies, and that your young men are on the war-path and you are no more his friends and children. But we have thrown away our bodies, and will not turn back. When you told us that your young men would kill us, you did not know that our hearts were strong, and you did not count the rifles that my young men carry in their hands. We may be few, and you are many, in numbers, and you may think to kill us; but if you try there will be much crying of women in your villages, for many of your young men will stay behind and forget to return with the others from the mountains. Do you think that our great chief will let his soldiers die, and will not

cover their graves? Before the snows melt again his warriors will have swept away your villages as the fires in autumn sweep the prairies. Look around. See! I have pulled down my white lodges and my people are ready: when the sun is ten paces higher, we shall be on the march. If you have anything new to tell us, you should say it soon. I am done."

With that the lieutenant turned his back, and strode out; after him strode Kit Carson and Lucien Maxwell and all, even the agent, with the three boys forming the rear. Presently, at decent interval, filed forth the chiefs, blanket shrouded; they crossed the court and passed through the gate, for the lodges without.

"That was a good speech, wasn't it!" praised Randolph. "And he means what he says, too."

"Guess you start right away," said Henry; for Lieutenant Frémont had immediately mounted his horse, at the post gate, and was dashing for the camp, followed by the other men. So, hastily vaulting into their own saddles, with a whoop the three boys, abreast, raced after.

VI

INTO THE WILDER WEST

OLIVER secretly was pleased to see that Kit Carson, scouring the plain like a centaur, soon overtook the lieutenant. No rider could beat Kit. However, neck and neck they galloped into the camp, and simultaneously checked their horses short.

"All right. En avant!" cried Frémont, his voice ringing keenly. And Kit Carson shouted to his own squad: "Ketch up, boys!"

The mules and carts were packed and waiting; now into their saddles clambered the men. Frémont and Carson and Maxwell and others proceeded to shake hands with Agent Boudeau; gay salutations of parting were exchanged.

"We'll ride a little way with you, but we can't go far, I suppose," vouchsafed Henry, to Oliver.

"We'll be here when you come back, though. You can tell us all about it," proposed Randolph, hopefully. "You'll see Independence Rock and Devil's Gate and South Pass and Wind River Mountains and everything!"

But they were interrupted, for just as amidst a jostling and confusion of orders addressed to pack

animals and mule teams the company were forming upon the march, came galloping from the direction of the post one of the Sioux chiefs.

"Thar's Bull's Tail," grumbled Lieutenant Ike. "Wants to say something."

"The chief says that they are sorry to see you go in anger," translated Agent Boudeau to Lieutenant Frémont. "It makes their hearts sad to think that you are likely to run into danger. So they have found a young man who will join you this evening and try to keep you safe. But he is very poor; he has no horse, and he expects you to give him one."

"That is good. Tell him to send the young man. We will camp about fifteen miles from here, near where the river Platte issues from the red rocks."

The chief grunted acknowledgment and loped back to the post, probably on his way to Fort Platte below, at the mouth of the Laramie.

Once again the company were set in motion; they strung out into a long procession, Frémont and Kit Carson leading; the Frémont party following, and the Carson party as the second division. The Frémont party had eight stout two-wheeled covered carts, for the provisions and tents and scientific instruments. These carts creaked; the drivers cracked whips above the two-mule teams; the happy-go-lucky Frenchmen laughed and sung and chattered; but the men from Taos rode more gravely.

Now at a turn of the trail, where it entered the

hills, only a few minutes' ride from the post, must Henry and Randolph reluctantly halt, and let the train continue without them. They waved hand at the men; and with answering wave from Lieutenant Frémont and Kit Carson and Oliver, and voyageurs and trappers all, the cavalcade passed on. Glancing back, Oliver noted that the hill defile had at once closed, shutting off view of Fort Laramie. The expedition was fairly started for the South Pass, 280 miles westward, at the source of the Sweetwater River. This was the great pass by which trappers and fur traders crossed the Rocky Mountains from the east or the American side to the west side shared by the United States and Great Britain; it was the pass to Oregon.

The trail, plainly wheel-marked by the party of the first Oregon emigrants which had travelled through only three weeks before, traversed a wide, rolling sagy plateau which occupied much of the space between the valley of the Laramie Creek, south, and of the North Platte River, north. About ten miles from the post a shallow, dry creek-bed was entered.

Down the creek-bed, which now ran with a little current of clear warm water, continued the procession, and unexpectedly to Oliver they all emerged at a rapidly flowing river.

"North Platte," announced Trapper New, nonchalantly. "Yep; an' a heap beaver stream, wagh!"

The leaders had halted; the Frémont party already were unharnessing and unsaddling; so evidently this

was the camping-place for the night. The upper end of the valley was closed by cliffs of scarlet, peeping over a little swell that intervened.

"I've seen time when this hyar valley war full o' buff'ler an' elk an' deer," remarked Trapper New, as the Carson squad good-naturedly hustled to beat the larger party in making camp. "But when Injuns air out, game gets scarce. We're going to have a lean trail, I reckon."

At this moment a ripple of laughter flowed through the party. Oliver followed the glances, and saw that the Frémont party were trying to erect a large tent; rather, a buffalo-hide lodge which they must have procured from the Indians at Fort Laramie. It was some twenty feet high, to the peak, and eighteen feet across, at the base, and was to be stretched like a cone over a framework of lodge-poles set in a circle and slanted to meet at a point. Almost the whole party, including the lieutenant and Kit Carson, were working at it. But twice it had toppled and fallen, burying the workers under its folds.

"Now, Kit knows," complained Ike Chamberlain. "He's seen many a lodge put up. But hyar comes somebody who knows better, I reckon. You watch. It's squaw work, anyhow; not man work."

Into the camp had ridden Agent Bissonette, from Fort Platte, with two Indians—man and wife. The woman, grinning broadly, at once trudged to the struggling group, and by gestures and short exclama-

tions, and by applying deftly her own strength, soon had the skin tent stretched and stationary.

Flushed and apologetic, Kit Carson strolled to his squad.

"That's harder than I thought," he said. "I've seen a thousand lodges raised an' struck, but I never touched one before. Thar always were squaws to do it."

"Camp hyar, do we, for the night?" commented Lieutenant Ike.

"Yes. Frémont wants to ride over an' inspect the canyon mouth yon, whar he's coming down in his rubber boat, on our way back."

"He air, air he!" grunted Ike. "Humph! Old White Head tried that once, didn't he—'fore his ha'r turned."

By "White Head" Oliver knew that Thomas Fitzpatrick, a noted trapper captain, was meant.

"Wall, he knows that Fitz lost all his furs an' nigh lost his life, voyaging into those canyons; but he's bound to find out for himself, an' I guess he will."

The canyon mouth was located at the red cliffs, up the valley about three miles; and as the sun had not set, and as there was nothing especial to do, a little bunch of the men from the two commands rode over. Oliver saw that here at the red cliffs the Platte came tumbling out of the mountain country. High upon either hand rose the scarlet walls, about one hundred yards apart, their shelves dotted with a few pines, their tops bear-

ing a fringe of the same dark-green. The river roared loudly, as it boiled down. Many rocks stuck up through the current.

"It's wuss above," quoth William New, when they all emerged, and rode away. "'Tain't any place for human being to travel in. Thar's one place called Fiery Narrows—wagh!"

"Ah, who fears?" laughed Descoteaux, Frenchman, of the Frémont party. "Where Monsieur Frémont go, I go."

"I, too," announced Clément Lambert, his comrade.

Frémont himself, with Basil Lejeunesse, his trusted adjutant, surveyed the place, the next morning; and when they rode back it was rumored that the lieutenant was more determined than ever to launch his boat, on the return from the South Pass.

As the company continued to advance, the next day, the country grew drier. Grasshoppers jumped in clouds from beneath hoof and wheel; so that William New, with whom Oliver rode, shook his head.

"Signs air bad," he mumbled. "When hoppers air many, grass air few."

No Indians had yet been sighted; but early in the afternoon a sudden commotion swept the line, as from scouting service in the advance back galloped four Frémont men.

"Aux armes!" they shouted. "To arms! They come—the savages!"

Around whirled their horses Kit Carson and Frémont, and while the lieutenant and Lucien Maxwell and Basil Lajeunesse urgently strove with the van, Kit Carson sped recklessly adown the line to the rear.

"To the river, boys!" he shouted. "We'll fort thar, an' let 'em come! Quick, now!"

How the men jumped to his clear tones! The river was near, on the right; its hither bank was high and steep; pack animals and mule teams were forced into trot and lope; the packs swayed and jolted, the carts jolted and swayed; loud rose the cries of the drivers. Just as on the Santa Fé Trail, in the attack by the Kiowas, now here upon the edge of the river, under the steep bank the carts were instantly wheeled into a semi-circle, enclosing the horses and mules. Over the bank peered the defenders, rifle muzzles forward, Oliver ready with his tack-studded gift from Kit.

"Bang! Whang!" sounded the reports as several of the Frémont men fired their guns, to be certain of their condition.

Mr. Bissonette and the Indian who was to protect the march from attack by his people had not "forted" with the column; they had at once ridden on, to meet the enemy, and to explain. Now here they came, back, with two new Indians.

"Wagh! Sioux!" grunted the men around Oliver.

Kit Carson, Lieutenant Frémont, Lucien Maxwell and Basil Lajeunesse stepped out and received the approaching four.

A brief conference was held only a dozen yards beyond the bank rampart. The twain Sioux were painted and half naked (save for the paint on their chests); they seemed sullen and unresponsive, and spoke with few words and many sign-gestures. Mr. Bissonette eked out their tale, and in the fort Trapper New kept pace for the benefit of Oliver and the others.

"Been on war path, up Sweetwater; looking for scalps—need scalps to make their dead warriors happy by a dance, an' to dry up the tears o' the women (wagh!); too many white people in their country; overtook party o' whites (emigrants, I reckon) at Indypendence Rock on Sweetwater; Broken Hand (Oliver knew that this meant Thomas Fitzpatrick again) war leading party; half o' Sioux wanted to attack, half didn't; these two war in half that did want to——"

"Give it to 'em, boys!"

"Feed 'em Galena pills!"

"Lift their ha'r!"

"Tirez! Tirez! (Fire! Shoot!)"

"Des coups de baguettes pour les scoundrels! (Shots for the scoundrels!)"

Thus rose the indignant cries, at the announcement. But Frémont turned and raised his hand commandingly; and the cries died to a mutter.

"They war in the half that did want to," continued Trapper New. "Finally, the war party busted, seeing they couldn't agree, an' have scattered. Most went

over into Crow country, north, after Crow scalps an' hosses; rest air travelling back down the Platte. Thar's no grass an' no buff'ler."

Lieutenant Frémont and the others were conducting the two Sioux around the bank and into the little fort. Still sullen, the visitors were permitted to gaze about, and see how angry and well-armed were this white company. Then they were given a present of tobacco and told to go.

"Wall," remarked the quiet voice of Kit Carson, as, among his men, for a moment he reflectively watched the two Sioux ride off as if glad to escape, "I've fought Injuns an' they've fought me, in mountains an' on plains, for over fifteen year, now—but sometimes I don't blame 'em. 'Tain't natural for 'em to sit by an' let their country be occupied by whites—their country that they've owned. An' that's what it means—this settler travel to Oregon: it means white people on both sides the mountains. Beaver air thinned, buff'ler air getting scarce, an' some day thar won't be any room for the Injun. An' they suspect it. Pore critters!"

VII

OVER THE FAMED SOUTH PASS

"THE best advice that I can give you is to turn back at once," declared Mr. Bissonette, flatly, to Lieutenant Frémont.

'Twas near noon of the fifth day after the adventure with the first of the Indians. Other Indians, mainly Sioux, had been met, in small parties, as the Frémont company had travelled on up the Platte. This morning the trail finally had intercepted the road to Oregon, which here crossed the river, and four miles beyond more Indians were met. The obliging Mr. Bissonette had come far enough; by the Oregon Trail he was going back to Fort Platte at the mouth of the Laramie Creek, but he lingered to have an interview with these latest of the Sioux.

"They say that the country ahead is very bad," he reported. "Their main village has made a wide detour from the river to the south, looking for game. There are no buffalo in this whole region, because on account of the drought and the grasshoppers there is no grass. The trail of the village is marked by lodges thrown away in flight, and by the skeletons of the horses that the people must eat for food, or that have

starved to death. The best advice that I can give you, is to turn back at once."

"No, sir; I am under instructions to go on to the South Pass, and on I go," replied Lieutenant Frémont, loudly enough for all the men to hear. "But if anybody wishes to turn back with you, now that there is the opportunity, he has my permission."

Ensued a moment of expectancy, as man looked upon man; no one made the move or said the word.

"Ma foi! (My goodness!)" exclaimed Basil Lajeunesse, breaking the spell. "We'll eat the mules!"

At this they all laughed. Mr. Bissonette shook hands around, and so did the Indian whom the chiefs had sent along; and they rode away, down the Oregon road, for the post—the Indian with his squaw and his horse-present.

Henceforth Kit Carson was to be the guide, for he knew the country from the Platte up the Sweetwater.

Ere proceeding, first they must get rid of their cumbersome baggage and their carts, so as to be able to travel light and fast. The Kit Carson party already were travelling light, trapper style; but for plains work the Frémont party had their carts and the several tents. However, here, after the discouraging report, through Mr. Bissonette, from the Sioux, all turned to and made a cache or hiding place for the discarded stuff.

The carts were taken apart—hoods and frames and wheels—and these pieces were stowed out of sight

among thick willows growing near. A hole ten feet square and six feet deep was dug in a sandy opening in the midst of the same willows, and lined with brush, and tarpaulins; and in this were stowed the other things not absolutely necessary. They were covered with an old buffalo robe; the sand was thrown in, the top was levelled and any suspicious "sign" smoothed away or disfigured; and with pack-mules laden the company were prepared for the long hard trail awaiting.

"Wagh!" grunted William New. "Hyar's whar we shine. Now for Indypendence Rock an' the Sweetwater an' the Pass over. We got a guide who air up to trap. That agent purty nigh lost us, but you can't lose Kit Carson."

"How far to the Pass?" queried Oliver.

"Wall, by regular trail it's 'bout fifty miles to the Rock, an' then a hundred to the Pass. But we aren't going by regular trail; see? We're travelling on up the Platte, an' it turns southward, for the Bull Pen or what they call New Park; whilst the regular Oregon an' trapper trail cuts the curves, on other side, lining for the Sweetwater. It's the Sweetwater that flows down from the Pass an' j'ines the Platte below at head o' those red canyons we saw."

The stories by the Indians seemed not true; for when the next day the march was resumed buffalo were sighted. Some would have been killed had not Clément Lambert's horse, just as Clément was closing

in on the tail of the fleeing herd, plunged headlong into a sudden ravine; while Clément was climbing out, the buffalo, tails high, scrambled like goats up a precipice ridge, and escaped.

Nevertheless, the camp that night was supplied with jerked or dried buffalo meat from a previous hunt, and found plenty of grass.

Frémont had named the camp, several nights back, where the buffalo meat had been obtained, Dried Meat Camp. Yesterday's camp was of course Cache Camp; on this all agreed. This afternoon's camp was pitched near a mud bank studded with large pebbles worn oval; therefore William New dubbed it Goose-Egg Camp!

Now according to Lieutenant Frémont's compass the Platte was inclining more and more to the south; and it was rumored among the men that unless they crossed pretty soon to the Sweetwater, so as to strike it above its juncture with the Platte, they would be entangled among precipices. The country was beautifully red, with brown and pink sandstone and "pudding-stone" (as the pebbly formation was termed), and even the soil was red; a curious landscape flowed through by the greenish river. But twelve miles from Goose-Egg Camp Kit Carson, riding ahead with Lieutenant Frémont, halted. So halted the column.

"Injun sign," announced Ike Chamberlain, for the way was crossed by a trail of an Indian village which, here camping, had left lodge-poles and horse skeletons.

But not for "Injun sign" had halted Kit Carson;

he was talking earnestly with the lieutenant and with Lucien Maxwell and Basil Lajeunesse, and pointing.

"We'll have to turn off. Knew we would," predicted Trapper New. "An' that army fellow'll find out why, if Kit hasn't told him plain enough an' he goes on. Yonder's whar the Platte comes out the Fiery Narrows, an' on above the Fiery Narrows (which are *some,* I say!) are nothing but more canyons clear to mouth o' Sweetwater. Even a beaver couldn't get through, an' I don't reckon we can, either. An' it'd take a bird to cross."

Evidently Kit Carson had persuaded, for around swung the march, to double on its trail as far as a fair island, divided from the shore by only a shallow current. Close upon either bank of the river was a red ridge—one set with the "pudding-stones," some as large as a football. Upon this island, grassy and containing about twenty acres, was established the night's camp. To-morrow would the march be directed west across the angle from the Platte to the Sweetwater.

"Fifteen miles, an' I'll be glad to get thar," asserted Ike, at the evening fire. "Sweetwater trail is good trap trail; an' if we're locating emigrant route to Oregon that's the road."

The camp was a cheerful spot, this night, being supplied with mountain mutton; for Lieutenant Frémont and several of the men had ridden out upon a little exploring tour, beyond a red ridge, and had returned with mountain sheep. Now arose a discussion

as to whether the sheep could leap off high cliffs and land head-first on their broad-based horns. Ike and William New, Joseph Descoteaux and others of the Kentuckians and French in the two parties claimed to have seen the sheep make such escapes, when pursued —but not one had seen them land! Mr. Preuss, the funny, red-faced, bristly-haired German who was the map-maker and sketcher with the Frémont party and helped Mr. Frémont in figuring, said that the horns were for other purpose. However, as Kit Carson and the lieutenant were inclined to believe that the sheep could perform these leaps, the theory was generally adopted.

Goat Island was this camp named, because of the bag of sheep. At each camp Lieutenant Frémont and Mr. Preuss fussed with various scientific instruments— thermometer (which of course everybody knew, because it told of heat and cold), and barometer (which somebody said measured weight of air), and a watch-like thing called a chronometer (companion to which had been left at the post, for Randolph to keep wound up), and a sextant (which was claimed to be a sea instrument). By these instruments were obtained figures, carefully noted down in a book.

As many of the figures were obtained at night, in the dark, William New and the majority of the voyageurs and trappers were much puzzled. Back at the post the Indians had deemed the lieutenant to be a great medicine man, who read the sun and the stars;

and his tent was a place of tremendous mystery to them.

"Latitude so-an'-so, longitude so-an'-so, I hear said," grunted Trapper New. "That's the camping spot. Now, what air the sense o' that, unless figgers air written on the grass an' rocks so you can read 'em? When I find a place I don't look for figgers. It air one day travel nor'west o' the second left-hand fork o' Goose Creek; or it air half-way 'twixt Pilot Peak an' the head o' the Little Blackfoot; or some such. But these hyar figgers! I never saw any figgers, anywhar."

"What is this camp, Mr. Preuss?" asked Oliver, politely, of the busy tow-headed German.

"By chronometer and lunar distances and an occultation of Epsilon Arietis, it appears to be longitude one hundred and seven degrees, thirteen minutes, and twenty-nine seconds, east; latitude forty-two degrees, thirty-three minutes, and twenty-seven seconds, north," announced Mr. Preuss. "But we can't be sure of what instruments we have left. They are getting badly shaken up."

"Thank you," said Oliver, retiring, knowing no more than he did before. And he was much inclined to agree with Trapper New.

When in the morning they plashed away for the farther bank, they left upon the island a horse, as garrison. The horse was too worn and lame to travel; but with its plentiful grass and its abundant water the island was a perfect horse sanatorium. The poor ani-

mal gave one astonished and glad whinny after them, and fell to cropping again greedily, as if fearful lest they might change their minds.

"How far to Independence Rock now?" asked Oliver, of William New, as Goat Island and the river sank from view behind the red sandy, pebbly ridge.

"'Bout twenty-three or four mile, I reckon, or what Injuns call half a sun," answered Trapper New. "You must be heap anxious to see that 'ere rock, boy!"

"Yes, I am," admitted Oliver. "I'm going to put my name on it. Is yours there?"

"Used to be; an' if somebody or wind an' weather hasn't scratched it out it's thar yet. But it doesn't 'mount to much 'longside names that nothing can scratch out."

"We ought to camp at the rock, to-night."

"Can, if we don't stop shorter," agreed Trapper New, dryly.

But they did stop; for as they were descending a long slope of short brush and flowers, and a glimmer of a stream, at the bottom, had risen the glad cry: "Sweetwater!" another cry interrupted. "Buffalo! Buff'ler!" At the mouth of a shallow valley, across, had appeared dark masses that looked like moving gooseberry bushes.

Down dashed Lucien Maxwell, the official hunter of the expedition; down dashed Kit Carson, and Clément Lambert, and Ike and William New, and Oliver himself; and as soon as they could down dashed others:

so that by the time camp was located beside the Sweetwater, and fires had been made, the first buffalo had fallen to the crack of Kit Carson's rifle. Oliver killed a fat cow and a huge bull; his Kit Carson rifle shot strong and true. Every hunter was successful, so that this night there was much meat in camp, and the company did not mind sleeping under sage-bushes, in a rain. Only the big lodge had been brought along, and here was no tree to serve as lodge-pole.

The next morning they moved up the Sweetwater to Independence Rock.

"Thar she is—the Sign-board o' the Sweetwater Trail to South Pass," directed Ike, as the Carson squad came in sight of a gray mass up-swelling like an enormous whaleback above the sea of sage; a single pine, like a scrap of a fin, upon its very spine.

"She's independent, all right," observed William New. "She stands out alone. But I reckon she war named 'cause some o' Ashley's beaver-hunters, who broke this trail, after the Injuns, ten or fifteen year ago celebrated Fourth o' July hyar, or Indypendence Day, as it air called down east."

Independence Rock was a huge bare weather-beaten, rounded mass of gray granite, forty yards high and 650 yards long, rising right out of the plain, on the north of the Sweetwater. As seemed to Oliver, curiously examining the surface, about everybody who had passed had carved or scratched his name or initials. Here were names of trappers, traders and missionaries,

THE FIRST BUFFALO HAD FALLEN TO THE CRACK OF KIT CARSON'S RIFLE

already thickly placed as high as arm could reach from horseback. To read the collection was a fascinating pastime. Oliver found Kit Carson's name, and Jim Bridger's, and Jim Beckwourth's, and William New's, and Ike's, and Sol Silver's, and General Ashley the famous Missouri fur-trader's; etc. And there were many Indian signs; and there were names, freshly carved, of the emigrants who had passed by only two or three weeks before. And a large "*Independence.*"

This afternoon part of the company (whose names were already upon the rock) went buffalo hunting; but Oliver and the others attacked the rock.

"Hooray!" cheered the red-headed Irishman Tom Tobin, appearing from the other side of the rock, carrying a ladder made from cross-sticks tied with hide thongs to a pair of lodge-poles.

"Sioux ladder," pronounced Mariano the Mexican. "Bueno!"

Climbing by aid of this, they placed their names much higher than any names yet.

Early the next day the second of the Sweetwater Trail wonders was reached. This was Devil's Gate, five miles above Independence Rock. It was another canyon, but very narrow, about 300 yards long, and almost 150 deep; and through it, among boulders and jagged blocks, roared the Sweetwater. The trail to the South Pass made a circuit back from this Devil's Gate, so as to dodge the rough ridge; but Lieutenant Frémont and the scientific Mr. Preuss, and Oliver and

many others who never had seen into Devil's Gate, or who wanted to see into it again, rode over to the rim and peered down.

The trail was growing rougher. The Sweetwater rippled in and out of little parks or pockets amidst the low hills of its valley; a mountain range bordered the valley on either hand, and to the south the slopes were ablaze with fires set by the Indians to drive the game (said William New) back to the open country. The fire seemed to make rains gather; and to-night's camp was another wet, uncomfortable camp, but nobody complained. However, the rain, sweeping down from the high country, certainly was cold!

"See thar?" invited Trapper New, to Oliver, the next morning, pointing ahead.

They were topping a little rise, still near the faithful guiding Sweetwater; and far before, against the horizon, in a vista opened to the march, a line of dark mountains.

"Those air the Wind River mountains, to north o' the South Pass. Pass cuts one end o' them, I reckon. They're heap medicine mountains; Injuns say they're ha'nted by evil spirits. The Crows won't go in 'em."

"How far?" asked Oliver, gazing hard.

"Seventy miles, 'bout."

The Sweetwater was slowly dwindling, as they approached its sources. They picked up an Indian horse whose hoofs were sore; and an Indian dog, who was

glad of the scraps that the men tossed to him. But he wasn't friendly, and Oliver named him " Wolf."

Rain, and rain, and rain! That was now the weather program, every day; and when, five days beyond Devil's Gate, at last the morning broke with sunshine, suddenly near at hand, right before, rose grandly with complete robe of dazzling white the Wind River mountain-chain. So high and aloof were they, that upon their flanks the rain had been snow.

And now the South Pass was near indeed, for the Sweetwater was dividing into several streams, spreading like the veins of a leaf, to drain the little side valleys.

" What do yore figgers say as to our height up? " queried Ike, carelessly, of Mr. Preuss.

" I cannot tell you, yet, my friend," responded Mr. Preuss, nervously.

" Wall," remarked Ike, " I can tell you without figgers that we're climbing. Cactuses air going; moss air beginning; an' that's a sartin sign, in the hills."

Oliver kept his eyes sharp set for the celebrated pass. He had before crossed the top of the Rocky Mountains; but here was a pass the most famous of all—said to be the only single pass by which the traveller changed at once from the east side to the west side of the mountains. So he watched keenly.

The morning was rainy, again; Kit Carson and Lieutenant Frémont led the march away from the wheel-marked road which had been followed much of

the time, and took a saddle and pack trail that swung out, one side. They all rode along leisurely and without trouble, winding about upon a series of billowy slopes, with the Wind River Mountains gradually unfolding gap and crest, on the right. After a ride of five or six miles Kit Carson and Lieutenant Frémont halted, and engaged in a discussion, while now and then pointing and examining. The cavalcade gradually gathered about them.

"I've been hyar, on an' off, during a dozen years," was saying Kit Carson, mildly. "An' I nor any other man can ever be exactly sure. But 'cording to my notion an' my recollection, this ought to be it."

"It seems so to me, too," concurred the lieutenant.

"But where's the pass?" queried Oliver, of William New.

Trapper New chuckled.

"Whar? Look under yore hoss, boy. You're on it!"

"South Pass?" stammered Oliver, astounded.

"Right. Kit says the top—didn't ye hear him? Behind air the United States, before air Oregon. All that 'ere country, west to the mouth o' the Columbia at the Pacific Ocean; that air Oregon. And wagh! what a beaver country! Down below us, northwest, air the Valley o' the Green River, big trappers' rendezvous place."

This was the pass—the great South Pass? They had halted upon an open swale between twain low

rounded, smooth hills; behind them, the route which they had traversed, stretched a billowy sandy slope which was the ascent, but which Oliver had not recognized as such.

"About the grade of Capitol Hill, from the Avenue, at Washington," commented Lieutenant Frémont. "How is the other side—the same?"

"About the same," nodded Kit.

"How runs the road to the Columbia—the remaining part of this Oregon Trail?"

"At the foot of the pass thar's the Little Sandy an' the Big Sandy Rivers, an' all flat desert clear to the Crossing o' the Green River. Then it gets rougher from the Green west to the Bear an' on northwest up the Bear to the Sody Springs. Then it air on westward and northward from the B'ar to Fort Hall at the Snake; west up along the Snake—or what some call the Lewis Ford o' the Columbia—a two weeks' march across the Plains o' the Snake an' a bad country beyond to Fort Boisé toward the mouth o' the Snake; then it's across the the Blue Mountains, to the Columbia; an' from thar it air 'bout two hundred miles to Vancouver, they say. As for myself, I've never been much west, on that trail, o' Goose Creek between Hall and Boisé."

Gazing into the west, where hazy lay Oregon, Frémont's blue eyes kindled and flashed.

"What a country!" he said. "And there waits the trail. It's a hard trail, Kit?"

"Right hard. These wagons ahead of us may

get through to Fort Hall, but beyond Hall it's hoss, mule an' moccasins, nigh a thousand miles."

"It's a trail I'd like to try," mused Frémont. "And it's a country worth a bigger try. The United States has better claim to it than England has. England has her hunters there—we'll have our farmers there; and the man who tills the soil is the man who wins the land. He produces, and stays; the trapper only consumes, and moves on."

"I shouldn't wonder," responded Kit Carson, slowly. "We trappers open the way—but that's all. I've often thought that I'd go to farming, an' I believe I will. Some o' the mountain-men air at work already, in the Columbia country."

"Well," quoth the lieutenant, "we'll have to see more of that country; this isn't the end of the trail, yet, you know. But the South Pass is about the limit of my orders. However—en avant! We can camp at the west foot, on the Pacific side. I want to cross."

VIII
PLANTING THE HIGHEST FLAG

It was the third day after the halt upon crossing of the South Pass; now in camp by a lake at the head of the New Fork of the Green River, northwest from the South Pass, the lieutenant had decided to climb the Wind River mountain-chain, to the northeast, and measure the highest peak.

Here in the grove of beech-trees amidst which the camp was located the lieutenant fortified by raising a breastwork of logs; in charge of this camp and corral he and Kit Carson left about half the company, under Baptiste Bernier of the Frémont party; and with the other half, provisioned by dried meat, maccaroni and coffee for two days, they set out.

"Wall, boy," said Kit, in telling off his own party, to the expectant Oliver, "what do you think? Can you make a climb like that, into the snow? You'll freeze yore moccasins."

The Carson tanned, sandy face was solemn, but the keen gray eyes were twinkling; for he read Oliver through and through. He knew how hard Oliver *wanted.*

"I think I could do it," answered Oliver, hopefully. "I'm not afraid to try."

"Better come along then," bade Kit; and proceeded with his duties.

Oliver went.

One snowy peak of the heavily-wooded, white-crested, sharp-toothed ridge to the northward seemed to stand up above all others. This was accepted by the camp below as being the highest peak of the Wind River Mountains. Some of the men thought it to be one mile, some two miles, some three miles high; and all declared it to be higher than the great James' or Pike's Peak which was the landmark northwest of Bent's Fort.

The South Pass had been crossed during August 8; now early in the morning of August 12 the little party left Camp Bernier (as it was christened, in honor of Baptiste its commander), and upon the best of the hardy mules, with pack animal for the coffeepot and the meat kettle and a few tin cups and the provisions, each member carrying at his saddle a blanket for bedding, headed forth for the great feat.

The first day's travel conducted amidst a richly verdured country of trees and grass and flowers, secret valleys, rushing streams and gem-like lakes—a constant surprise to Kit Carson and all, who never had penetrated here before. In late afternoon were passed wonderful lakes which poured one into another by cataracts; and through a silent level forest, grassed like a city lawn, the explorers, riding on, camped in a

dark, rock-and-pine surrounded little gulch—"the heart," as William New expressed, "o' nowhere."

"Never white nor Injun war in this region before," he asserted, with wag of his shaggy head. "This chile ain't afraid; but if these hyar mountains air ha'nted an' the spirits air up to trap, they got a chance to get us, sure!"

However, Oliver saw Kit Carson wink at the lieutenant and Lucien Maxwell, as the speech reached them, and it was evident that these three leaders did not believe the Indian tales. Consequently he himself decided that the reports of "evil spirits" awaiting were all bosh.

Kit Carson pointed through the little gulch.

"Thar's our peak," he said.

In the gulch defile dusk had gathered; but outside still lingered the twilight, and beyond the end of the gulch lifted, massy in the near distance, a snow summit.

There was space for only a few stars at a time to peer down into the narrow gulch; but the camp fires lighted redly the jumbled rocks and the crowded circle of pines like blanketed Indians of heroic size. Guarded by fires, and stars, and courage, and by One who was nearer than the fires, farther than the stars, and mightier than courage, here through the chill black night of the deepest wilds safely slept the camp.

In the morning start was made early. The ride onward, up a long valley which flowed with springs and bloomed with many flowers, promised success.

And when they reached the head of the valley, they found themselves at a fair little lake, set about with asters, in a green lawn bordered by rocks and pines.

At the edge the park fell away into a wide cross-draw rippled by ridges; and across it, apparently not more than a mile, rose again the Wind River Range surmounted by the high peak.

The lieutenant and Kit Carson determined that now the mules and the baggage might be left and that the draw should be crossed and the climb beyond be made afoot. Accordingly, here in this beautiful little basin was stationed a " mule camp "; here were left the provisions and blankets and coats, with two or three men in charge. Afoot the others pushed on, in their flannel shirt-sleeves—for so near seemed the snowy range that they felt certain of climbing it and returning before dark! Lieutenant Frémont carried tucked inside his shirt an American flag, of special design showing amidst the stars an eagle clutching peace-pipe and arrows. Such a token the Indians could understand. This flag the lieutenant wished to plant on the loftiest spire of the West.

This proved a very deceptive valley. Those ridges which looked upon from above had appeared to be ripples, when inspected from below were gigantic breakers, 500 feet high, frequently separated by chasms. Therefore the pace was up, and down, and back and around, and each task achieved brought but another as hard or harder. Rocks fell, waters seen and unseen

roared, the difficulties increased, and almost might the wayfarer believe, like Trapper William New, that the Wind River Mountains were held under the rule of evil spirits.

By four o'clock the line of bristling snow-seamed crests looked as far ahead as ever. Now torn and scarred and hungry and exhausted, the party came together upon the sandy beach of another little lake, amidst the innumerable ridges. Here upon a broad flat rock above the lake they camped for the night.

Just beyond the lake and camp all trees ceased, and around about were snow patches. The sun sank, behind the dark ridges; an icy breeze sprang up, soughing through the few pines, mingling its song with the weird chant of a waterfall emptying into the lake below.

The lieutenant was suddenly stricken with a violent attack of headache and stomach-sickness. They decided that this was due to climbing up and down among the rocks, and to the lack of food and warmth. The breeze blew away the heat of the fires, the moon arose and seemed to make things colder, the granite rock was hard and chill, they had nothing to eat and no coverings; and altogether it was an uncomfortable camp.

Nobody complained, of course. They were men, and explorers. Kit Carson said that he had been in worse places, and afterwards had been in better places, and that he expected to be in better places again! This was a cheering thought.

Oliver curled in the lee of a fire, so that a little of the heat might blow across him, and occasionally he dozed. Whenever he awakened, he saw the grim, whitish line of pinnacles, cold and still in the moonlight, as if watching and waiting for their next efforts.

Early in the morning, "not being delayed by any breakfast," as remarked Lieutenant Frémont (who was better), they set out again.

Now the enchanter guarding the magic pinnacles doubled his spells against them. Steeper were the ridges, sharper were the precipices, more loudly roared the waters, ice and snow were strewn underfoot. Mr. Preuss slipped and slid head over heels down an ice-field into the bristling rocks at the bottom. But he was only bruised. Clément Lambert and Joseph Descoteaux were taken ill and must lie down in their tracks. Lieutenant Frémont also was taken ill, again, in head and stomach; and halting sent his barometer on to Mr. Preuss the plucky German, who was ahead. Mr. Preuss must proceed to the high peak and see what the barometer said when there. But Mr. Preuss found himself cut off from the peak by a precipice or canyon. Kit Carson, trying to reach Mr. Preuss and help him, discovered a trail to the main divide, and climbing a knob or butte saw the high peak, which they had been calling the "Snow Peak," still a thousand feet above him!

So back he came, and they all went into council. Lieutenant Frémont seemed to be growing worse;

Clément Lambert and Joseph Descoteaux were very weak; but nobody was ready to quit. Instead, Basil Lajeunesse with a party of four was despatched back to the Mule Camp, to bring up mules and provisions and blankets. How the mules would get through none might say; but they would, for mules always did. Wherever a man could go, a mule could go.

"Hadn't you better go along back, too, boy?" asked Kit Carson, of Oliver; and Oliver shook his head.

"I'm all right; I'd rather stay," he said, trying not to let his teeth chatter.

With Lieutenant Frémont very ill and scarcely able to stagger, they returned to the camp on the rock above the lake, and waited here.

Lieutenant Frémont, pale and giddy, lay with his arm over his eyes, to shut out the light; the others sat about—Clément Lambert and Joseph Descoteaux languid, their heads drooping. Silence reigned—and sharper and colder stood forth the line of pinnacles, as more swiftly sank the sun. Presently Lieutenant Frémont stirred, sat up, and spoke.

"I think that we've done about all that we can, in this direction," he said. "What do you think, Kit?"

"Wall," drawled Kit Carson, quietly, "we can climb it if we keep trying along enough. I've been in wuss places before."

"The survey itself is finished—as much as the War Department would require, and I doubt if this

extra risk to all concerned in the party is authorized," continued Lieutenant Frémont. "I think that first thing in the morning you'd better take the most of the men and go on down to the Mule Camp; and after we make a few more observations the rest of us will follow. Basil probably won't bring up enough stuff to last the whole party of us long."

"Thar he comes," announced William New.

Sure enough! The clatter and scraping of hoofs among rocks could be heard, plainly, from below. And presently a small cavalcade struggling over log and boulder appeared, rounding the end of the lake. A cheer welled—"crack! crack!" rifle and pistol exchanged salutes—and soon the rescue squad panted into the camp at the flat granite rock.

They were Basil and four new men in place of the four whom Basil had worn out on the trip down; and their saddle animals and several led mules, bearing blankets and provisions. Hurrah! Now with the hot coffee and the dried meat served hot or cold it seemed that the fires, as if fed also, burned brighter, that the rock was softer, that the breeze was gentler, and that even the grim row of pinnacles, o'er-watching, vented a smile or two. Rolled in the army blankets everybody slept.

For his part, so soundly slept Oliver that when he opened his eyes it was to sunshine and breakfast preparations. Rather scandalized at his laziness (which

was not laziness at all) he struggled to throw off his blanket and to sit up.

Mr. Preuss and Auguste Janisse (who was one of the Frémont Frenchmen) were busy attending to fire and coffee; otherwise the camp seemed deserted.

"Ah, good morning," greeted Mr. Preuss, his tow hair upright as usual, his German features red. "Du hast sehr wohl geschlept; what? Well, they have gone and left you."

"Who?" stammered Oliver, blinking about.

"Kit and your party; Maxwell and the others, too."

"The lieutenant?"

"No. We stay."

"Oui; we stay. Maybe we try again," added Auguste.

At the moment Lieutenant Frémont strode around a rock; he and Basil Lajeunesse and Joseph Descoteaux and Clément Lambert had been down to look after the mules.

"Hello, my boy," spoke the lieutenant, with cheery smile. "Kit and your crowd have gone; they went at day-break, as arranged last night, for the mule camp; but we thought we'd let you sleep."

"Thank you, sir," stammered Oliver, striving to collect his memories. "I was to go, too. I didn't mean to sleep over. Can't I catch them?"

"You can stay with us, if you like. We'll follow, during the day."

At this moment Clément Lambert winked and nodded so hard at Oliver, that Oliver decided promptly:

"I'll stay, sir."

For evidently something especial was brewing, besides coffee!

At breakfast the secret came out.

"We'll make one more try, boys," spoke Lieutenant Frémont. "The day's fine, we're in good shape with food and a night's rest, and Basil and I've noted a narrow draw off the left that looks like a trail to the top of the divide. We've got all day before us, and can take things easy."

"Good!" approved Mr. Preuss; and "Bien! Good!" echoed the others, nodding.

"I didn't expect to do this, when I let Kit and the rest go back," said the lieutenant. "But we ought not to miss this chance. The boy here must represent the Taos crowd."

And Oliver determined that he would if he could.

Enough food for one more meal was saved, and covered over with rocks so that birds would not eat it. Then upon the mules they set forth, to climb that highest peak. They felt fresh, the mules seemed to feel fresh; and through the long narrow draw, almost a little canyon, they made steady way. This was the defile which the lieutenant and Basil Lajeunesse had discovered. Sure enough, it led up and out to the very

divide itself. And here they were, at last, mules and all!

The mountain chain now rose above them like a huge granite wall, well-nigh perpendicular, and breaking, two or three thousand feet above their heads, into a line of saw-tooth peaks. They were enabled to ride along until under the Snow Peak itself; upon a grassy bench above a trio of mystic green lakes, they turned loose the faithful mules, and proceeded to climb afoot.

"Take it easy," ordered the lieutenant, as they panted in the thin air.

Each picking what he considered the easiest trail, they gradually strung out. The lieutenant had left his rifle down near the mules, and wore his pistols; but some of the men had no pistols and some refused to lay aside their rifles anyway, for it was against mountain-man rules ever to move from camp without rifle in hand. Oliver carried his Kit Carson rifle; and as he toiled to keep up with Basil and Mr. Preuss, just in front of him, glancing aside he saw that the lieutenant, off by himself, was halting, to change his thick moccasins for a pair of thin ones. Then the lieutenant continued, lightly and rapidly, up a steep bare stretch which he had found.

"En avant, mes braves," he panted, cheerily—which was French for "Forward, my brave fellows."

He sprang ahead for another of the many irregular ridges or wrinkles; what an energetic, tireless man he was, thought Oliver; he was almost the equal of

Kit Carson—and he was only an army officer and was not a trapper. Up to the top of the next rock ridge scrambled the lieutenant; and abruptly his voice sounded, thin but commanding:

"Look out! Wait where you are! I think this is it!"

He was bracing himself cautiously, as if balanced; and he peered around, examining the horizon. More cautiously he stepped back, and down a few paces.

"Now, one at a time," he called. "No more. And be careful."

Mr. Preuss climbed, stood, and in turn backed down; Basil Lajeunesse did the same; and did the same all, Oliver last. Oliver found himself upon a comb of gray granite, only about three feet wide, wind-swept of snow, sloping keenly and breaking, in another step, to an icy precipice—as the eaves of a house break beyond the gutter-pipes. Five hundred feet below, like the roof of a porch, for instance, lay a great snow-field, which sloped off to another precipice; and after this a snow-field which might be called the ground below the porch-eaves spread abroad to a ridge (which might be a buried fence) a mile away.

"Come down," ordered the lieutenant of Oliver; and as cautiously as anybody Oliver backed off.

The lieutenant mounted again, and the instruments were passed up to him. He took observations; then tying his flag to a ramrod he planted it in a crevice of the rock cap. Backing off, he drew his pistol.

"Ready!" he called; there was quick cocking of pistols and rifles; "fire!"

"Crack-crack! Spat! Crack!" Flat were the reports, cut short without echo; but the Stars and Stripes here unfurled had been saluted.

Lieutenant Frémont and Mr. Preuss were busily figuring out what the barometer and the thermometer records would tell them.

"Thirteen thousand, five hundred and seventy feet," announced Lieutenant Frémont. "Probably the highest peak of the Rockies—and certainly the highest flag in the world," and he removed his hat.

They removed theirs, for a moment.

"Ma foi! And the highest bee in the world!" ejaculated Auguste Janisse, pointing to his knee.

A bumble-bee had lighted upon it!

"I declare!" exclaimed the lieutenant. "Who'd think to find a bee up here in the ice—more than two miles high! Well, my little chap, you deserve to live if you can, but this is the best I can do for you, in the way of flowers;" and gently plucking the numbed insect from Auguste's knee he laid him among the dried botanical specimens between the leaves of a field book.

IX

THE VOYAGING OF THE PLATTE

SEVERAL days had gone by since, on this noon of August 15, in this year 1842, the Frémont little squad, toiling where never before had stepped human foot—foot of Indian nor foot of even hardy trapper—at last stood upon what they believed to be the highest point of the Rocky Mountains. To-day we know that Frémont Peak, at the western border of Wyoming, is not the highest point of the Rocky Mountains; it is outranked by many another peak; but mere figures cannot always measure human endeavor, and in boldly assailing and overcoming this the highest, most kingly peak within their knowledge, there to plant their flag, Lieutenant John C. Frémont and companions show as fine quality of spirit as though the crest had been a thousand feet further. They did their best, to the limit of opportunity.

To-day is August 23. The great South Pass from which still onward stretched into "Oregon" the wagon-wheel track of the first American emigrants has been re-crossed; and again at Independence Rock, Frémont has paused to inscribe amidst the thickly written names a large cross—token of westward press-

ing Christianity and civilization. This cross he filled with softened India-rubber, to preserve the trace. From the Rock he continued east on down the Sweetwater to its mouth. Here at its juncture with the Platte he is about to launch, on the morrow, his rubber boat.

This boat (which smelled very disagreeable—"wuss'n the tar springs at head o' Yellowstone," complained William New) was twenty feet long and five feet wide, when unfolded, and had air-tight compartments to be blown up or inflated so that it should not sink if capsized. It already had capsized, once, on the Kansas River, at the start of the expedition from Missouri.

Now the lieutenant was determined to canoe down the Platte, through the canyons, to see what the river looked like where it was hidden from the trail. Kit Carson shook his head over the plan.

"You'd better not," he said. "It's too dangerous. Thar air nothing but red canyons, one after another, cl'ar till the Platte gets out the mountains, at our fust camp above Laramie. Canyons air full o' falls an' rapids, an' some o' those rocks sticking up will punch a hole in that rubber contraption, sure. Fitzpatrick tried the trip, by boat, once, an' lost all his pelts an' 'most lost his life."

"Chut!" smiled the lieutenant. "My orders are to survey the Platte, and that seems the only way to do it. With this boat and good men to handle the

paddle I'll start at day-break and meet you at Goat Island for breakfast!"

So was it arranged that the main portion of the company should cut across by the land trail, as before taken, for Goat Island where they had left the Platte for the Sweetwater on their way out; and that the lieutenant and his crew should go on down by water.

The Taos party, including Kit Carson also, had been disappointed over not climbing the peak, and Oliver had felt elated; but none, not even Oliver, was disappointed over being omitted from the boat crew. For his crew Lieutenant Frémont selected Mr. Preuss the German; Clément Lambert, Basil Lajeunesse, Honoré Ayot, Leonard Benoit, Joseph Descoteaux, who were accustomed to paddling.

Camp was broken at dawn. The rubber boat, stretched and inflated, had been packed with ten or twelve days' provisions, principally dried meat, and with the precious scientific instruments, and with enough bedding.

"Thar's a thirty-foot fall down a ways! Hear her roaring?" shouted Trapper New, as the boat-crew launched forth. "Watch out for her!"

The lieutenant nodded and gayly waved his hand. His men paddled hard, the Platte was broad and smooth for several miles, and with its load the rubber canoe glided rapidly down.

The land party watched for only a minute. They must cut across for Goat Island, so as to meet the

voyagers there, at breakfast—although the lieutenant had said that if he reached it first he would leave a note before passing on. However, he did not reach it first!

It was only about twelve miles across from the mouth of the Sweetwater to the Platte at Goat Island. Here on Goat Island was found the horse that had been left there to recover; she now was sleek and seemed strong upon her feet, and very glad to see the other horses and the mules.

By breakfast time the lieutenant had not appeared; nor did he and his squad appear by ten o'clock. Higher climbed the sun, marching from east to west through the great blue dome, and Kit Carson and all began to grow uneasy. Close watch was kept of the river, for any tokens of a wreck; but nothing unusual drifted down upon the swollen tide which ran turgid with the rains and melted snows.

"Something's gone wrong with that rubber contraption," declared Kit. "I knew it would. I told 'em so." And he fidgeted here and there. "We'd better ride up the river, as far as we can, on both sides, an' find 'em."

So while a portion of the party remained to guard the camp, the others divided into two squads to scout either side of the Platte. Kit led a little squad up on the right, Oliver was told off to ride with Ike Chamberlain's squad, on the left.

The country along the left side of the river waxed

more and more difficult, with occasional cross canyons and frequent ridges of red and of white sand-stone interrupting. Some of these ridges and buttes were fantastic, looking like castles and spires and lighthouses. Oliver enjoyed the ride, but the obstructions only vexed Ike and the others. At a point whence a good view was given up the river for a quarter of a mile they dismounted, and seated themselves, and lighted their pipes.

"Hyar's far enough," declared Ike. "We can catch 'em if they come floating past. They haven't any business down in thar anyhow."

Oliver lingered a minute; but this sitting here was rather stupid.

"I'm going on," he announced.

"Wall," grunted Ike. "'Twon't do you any good. Yonder's the Fiery Narrows. If they air wrecked in thar you can't get at 'em, an' if they ain't wrecked in thar they'll come out."

Oliver rode along. He wanted to see those Fiery Narrows for himself.

The broken country forced him out and back from the river; and when he came in again he judged, from the roaring sound, that he must be at the Fiery Narrows. The river here swirled wildly through between reddish walls a hundred and more yards high. Slipping from the saddle and cautiously approaching the best and firmest spot, holding his horse by the lines Oliver craned his neck to peep in. The sight almost

made him dizzy. Glancing about from side to side he thought that he espied a trail. Down he clambered, rifle in hand.

The depths of the Fiery Narrows were a terrifying place for a landsman. The Platte, coffee-color and heavy with sediment, fairly boiled through, without beginning and without end; its current dashed in foam against up-sticking rocks, and spun from projecting shoulders; surely no boat of any kind could live in such an angered turmoil!

Suddenly Oliver witnessed an astonishing spectacle. As his eyes shifted from the opposite shore (which rose not so sheer, although still steep and high) to scan up-stream, they encountered a dark object speeding down upon the current. It was the Frémont boat —the rubber boat! And hurrah—the crew were aboard; all were safe!

One man was kneeling in the bows, with paddle, to turn the boat quickly; the others were ranged, paddles in hands, along the sides; now and then they dug hard with their blades, to keep the craft bows on with the current or to dodge a rock; but they came gallantly, and as they came, they appeared to be singing. How fast they sped! Maybe they would make it.

Lieutenant Frémont was plainly visible; so was Mr. Preuss. Basil Lajeunesse was the one in the bows. He was wet; they all were wet, as if they had capsized, already. Of course something had happened to them, for they were late.

Then, in an instant, something did happen. Just ahead of the boat was a little fall, where the current plunged over a ledge. It seemed to Oliver that the boat could leap this; he wondered if the crew saw it, before them; but he could do nothing, by voice or gesture, to warn them. He held his breath, watching. Out into the fall sprang the boat; but it did not clear—it toppled head-first, and spilling crew and baggage right and left it reappeared bottom-up!

As it came whirling down, helpless and inert, heads broke up around it. Lieutenant Frémont bobbed to the surface; he rose to his shoulders, as he swam, battling the current and looking for his men. Twice he was shunted from a sharp rock; and now he gave up and struck out lustily for the shore. He landed, and landed below him Mr. Preuss.

Now the boat had lodged against the Oliver side of the canyon, where a rock shoulder out-jutted. Basil Lajeunesse had clambered upon the upturned bottom, which looked like a huge turtle shell, and reaching he grabbed somebody by the hair. It was Joseph Descoteaux. Oliver heard what they said; they were only a few yards above him, and the words drifted along the canyon wall. He had picked up a smattering of French at Taos, where Kit Carson and others spoke it as well as Spanish.

"Lâche pas," gasped Joseph; "lâche pas, cher frère!" ("Loose not, loose not, dear brother!")

"Crains pas," panted Basil, sturdily. "Je m' en

AS THE BOAT CAME WHIRLING DOWN, HELPLESS AND INERT, HEADS BROKE UP AROUND IT

UNIV. OF MICH.

vais mourir avant que de te lâcher!" ("Fear not. I'll die before I'll let you go!")

That was a brave answer.

Basil hauled Joseph upon the boat-bottom. In one hand Joseph clutched a double-barrel gun, which was Lieutenant Frémont's. And now, dripping, out upon a narrow strip of sand bordering the current, below, and where Oliver stood, crawled Clément Lambert, Leonard Benoit and Honoré Ayot, so that all the crew were accounted for.

However, there was no time for exchange of sympathy. Down with a rush came the wreckage—blankets and boxes and record-books and pieces of clothing, and even the iron instruments; for so heavy was the water and so rapid was the current that the instruments had not yet sunk.

"Quick!" bade Clément. "Vite! Arrêtez-les!"

And he began to wade and grasp. From across the stream the lieutenant and Mr. Preuss, encouraging by gestures, also were rescuing the property. With a plunge Oliver seized a long black box which he knew contained the telescope, but the current almost overthrew him, and it whisked the box from his fingers.

Only a few of the things could be stopped; at last the lieutenant, with a gesture in sign-language, said that he and Mr. Preuss would continue on down-river along their edge, which was the left bank of the river, and that the others should continue on down by their edge which was the right bank. But Basil Lajeunesse,

the boat having been turned over again, boldly embarked, with a paddle, and took to the current.

"Hello," remarked Joseph Descoteaux to Oliver, now that there was time for greeting. "You saw us, n' est-ce-pas? Ma foi, but I was drowned if Basil had not held tight."

"That Basil, he is a water-rat; he is a beaver," pronounced Honoré Ayot. "We nearly were wrecked above, too, when the boat stuck fast and the water flowed right over us. After that we would have driven the boat by a rope paid out from on shore; but Basil was jerked in like a fish, and all you could see was his head like head of swimming beaver, as he was carried on down. Before he had caught up with the boat he had swum a half a mile."

"Yes, that is what he said when the lieutenant hauled him aboard. 'Ugh!' said Basil. 'Je crois bien que j' ai nagé un demi mile—I verily believe that I have swum a half a mile!'"

They all continued along the water's edge, in the canyon; clambering and wading and looking for articles from the wreck. A few record books were picked out; that was about the extent of the salvage. Across, the lieutenant and Mr. Preuss were likewise seeking.

"I'll go back and climb out and make for camp, to tell 'em you're coming," proposed Oliver.

So he did. He found in camp his own squad, and Kit Carson's squad, arrived ahead of him, they having

seen nothing from the rim. Fires were built up, and more meat was cut, in readiness. Late in the afternoon Basil and Clément, Ayot and Descoteaux toiled in, afoot, over the pudding-stone ridge and down to the island. They had abandoned the boat at a narrow place where it would not pass through, and Benoit had left to join the lieutenant.

At sunset the lieutenant and Mr. Preuss and Benoit appeared, descending from the same ridge; they had waded the river to cut across some bends. And right glad were all the voyagers to have the hot fires and the roasting meat awaiting them.

" Told you you couldn't get through with that thar boat," reminded Kit Carson, mildly, to the lieutenant.

" Well," responded Lieutenant Frémont, " we were under instruction to survey the Platte, and I felt that we should obey them to the fullest scope. We did our best."

The lieutenant had only one moccasin, and his feet were prickly with cactus spines; but the next morning he seemed to be well recovered. Basil was sent up to the foot of the Narrows, to bring down the few other articles that had been rescued and left there. They did not amount to much. All the instruments but the sextant were lost. However, the saving of the record books was good fortune, and the instruments had performed their principal work.

Now Fort Laramie was near. The next day Cache Camp was reached, and the carts and other property

which had been left there in hiding a month almost to a day were found undisturbed. With mules hitched to the carts again the expedition might victoriously trundle on for Fort Laramie. The Black Hills loomed nearer, on either hand; and with the Stars and Stripes in the advance the cavalcade on August 31 emerged from that little defile which afforded the first, as it had afforded the last, glimpse of the post.

From the parapet of the post burst a puff of white smoke; and following, echoed a dull "Boom!" The post must have seen the flag. "Boom! Boom!" saluted the single brass cannon, as on marched the cavalcade; presently smaller puffs of smoke welled out, from beside the post walls; that was rifles. Two figures came galloping. They were Henry and Randolph.

"You said forty days—you said that you'd be back in forty days," they proclaimed. "This is the forty-second. We've been watching for two days. The Indians have been watching, too, and the minute you left the mouth of the valley they saw you and recognized the flag. Hear the cannon?"

"Crack! Crack! Whang!" answered the expedition's rifles, to the welcome by the fort; and the garrison rushed out, with glad tongue and friendly hand.

X

FREMONT CALLS AGAIN

THUS into that post of Fort Laramie which they outward-bound had left on July 21, now on August 31 they inward-bound rode again, triumphant. Nothing in particular had occurred here; 'twas they who brought the main news—of a South Pass surveyed and a highest peak christened and a Platte River boldly penetrated.

"And all we did was to wind an old chronometer!" complained Randolph, disgustedly. "But I suppose we had to."

The day after the arrival at the fort the Taos men, including Kit Carson and Lucien Maxwell, started for home, southward; the Frémont party were to continue on, eastward, down the Platte, by the Oregon Trail, for Missouri; but at the parting it was understood that the next spring, after the lieutenant had made his report to the government, he was coming out with another expedition to explore along the Oregon Trail west of the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia River, and that he would want Kit Carson again.

Down to old Taos rode the Carson trappers, home bent; and home they were, ere the middle of September. Taos was glad to see them and to hear their tales.

Sol Silver and his party were still out, of course, to remain until the fall fur hunt. There was the fall fur hunt for all, and the fall buffalo hunt to supply Bent's Fort with winter meat. Then might the Carson men settle to a winter at Taos.

It proved to be a cold and snowy winter; but right in the midst of it, or about Christmas time, arrived excitement: three strangers, ragged and frost-bitten and weary, reduced almost to eating their buckskin clothing. A squad of Taos trappers brought them in from camp in the mountains.

One of the visitors was a half-breed guide from the trading post of Fort Uncompahgre, across near to the Grand River. Another was a tall, lean, roughly bearded man, with hair peculiarly marked in white and brown, deeply-set dark-blue eyes and large mouth. This was Dr. Marcus Whitman. The third was also a bearded man, broad-shouldered, light-blue eyed, with high forehead and calm mien. This was Mr. A. L. Lovejoy.

Dr. Whitman was a missionary doctor; he had been at the Green River trapper rendezvous in 1835, on his way west; and in 1836 he had led a party of missionaries including his bride and another woman (first white women to cross the Rockies, they) from the Missouri to the mission settlements of Oregon. Mr. Lovejoy had been among those American colonists who last spring, under Sub-Indian Agent Dr. White, had made

the wagon-wheel tracks seen by the Frémont company, up the Platte and the Sweetwater, over the South Pass, and on.

Now upon desperate mid-winter journey across continent from coast to coast was hurrying Dr. Whitman, with his brave companions, to appeal for more Americans in Oregon where the British also claimed the country. The little party had cut south, from Fort Uintah of present northeastern Utah, down through the mountains of present central Colorado, aiming for Santa Fé and for Taos, to evade the plains Indians and the deep snows. But the latter they had not evaded, and they nearly had perished miserably. Once they had swum, horses and all, an ice-encrusted river. And they had been obliged to kill their faithful dog and eat him.

Dr. Whitman and Mr. Lovejoy had left the mission headquarters on the Columbia October 3; now it was the middle of December; after a couple of weeks' stay at Taos, to gain strength, they pushed on, for Bent's Fort and the Santa Fé trail to Missouri.

The next event at Taos was the marriage of Kit Carson, on February of this new year 1843, to the Señorita Josefa Jaramillo, only sixteen, much younger than he. An exceedingly handsome girl was the Señorita Josefa, with clear creamy skin and great black eyes and dazzling teeth. The occasion was celebrated by a series of feasts and dances which lasted through several days and nights. At the close every-

body was worn out, so popular were Kit and his girlish bride.

In March Sol Silver took a party of trappers upon the regulation beaver hunt. The other Carson men remained in Taos, waiting.

"Wall, boy," remarked Kit, to Oliver, when the members of the Silver party were being told off, "which would you rather do—go up among the Blackfeet, with Sol, or out among the Chinooks, with Frémont?"

"Fremont, and you," promptly answered Oliver; and Kit Carson laughed.

"You're liable to find it the hard trail o' the two," he commented, dryly.

The spring waxed and waned, and came no word from Lieutenant Frémont, save the word that his report had been made to Congress, had spoken well of the Indian Country and of the trail through it, and that there was much talk of a big emigration, over the trail, this year, for Oregon.

Finally, about the middle of June, arrived a message from Kansas Landing, on the Missouri frontier, that the second exploring expedition of Lieutenant John Charles Frémont had started, and that the rendezvous was to be Fort St. Vrain. "White Head," or Thomas Fitzpatrick the famous mountain-man, was the guide, and Lucien Maxwell was accompanying as far as St. Vrain, on his way to Taos.

It did not take long for the Carson party to mount

and ride for Bent's, thence to proceed on northward for St. Vrain, 200 miles. But at Bent's was it learned that Lucien Maxwell had hastened south, from St. Vrain, to obtain mules in Taos, for the lieutenant; and that the lieutenant and a party were following, along the foothills, to meet the mules.

Now, at this time Texas was striving to be free from all claims of Mexico, and armed Texans had been invading New Mexico and threatening Santa Fé and Santa Fé caravans. This had caused the Mexican government to forbid intercourse back and forth across the border between New Mexico and foreigners; and the chance that Lieutenant Frémont might secure mules from Taos was slim. At Bent's Kit Carson himself turned off, up the Arkansas, to meet the lieutenant and to warn him of conditions.

He met him at the little settlement of the Pueblo, about seventy miles from the post. The town is to-day Pueblo, Colorado. Lieutenant Frémont immediately sent Kit back to Bent's, with a request that the fort supply some mules, if possible.

Meanwhile the Carson men, under Ike Chamberlain, rode on to St. Vrain.

Fort St. Vrain was situated opposite where the St. Vrain creek empties into the South Platte River, not far from the present Colorado town of Greeley. It was built of adobe clay bricks, and was commanded by Mr. Marcelin St. Vrain, younger brother of the Ceran St. Vrain who formed one in the partnership

Bent, St. Vrain & Co., of the Santa Fé Trail. A slim, boyish man was Marcelin St. Vrain, with black hair, black eyes and black whiskers. His wife was a Sioux girl.

The fort was out on the plains, a short distance from the foothills. Here awaiting the return of the lieutenant from his side trip up the South Platte and down to the Arkansas was Thomas Fitzpatrick with a detachment of twenty-five of the Frémont men.

A ruddy-faced, rather heavy-set man was Thomas Fitzpatrick, with thick hair turned snow white and with his left hand crippled. A severe adventure, in the summer of 1832, with Blackfeet Indians who had chased him and forced him to hide in a cave for three days, had whitened his hair; and the bursting of his rifle had crippled his hand. The Indians called him not only "White Head" but also "Bad Hand" and "Broken Hand."

He and Ike and the other Taos trappers greeted each other tumultuously, for all knew and respected Thomas Fitzpatrick.

Fitzpatrick had brought the wagons and the heavy baggage. He was waiting and resting the animals. Lieutenant Frémont had taken one light wagon, and a cannon—a brass twelve-pounder; for this second expedition was armed with a field-piece, to be used if the Indians grew too bold.

About this cannon centred much of the post gossip. Some of the rumors said that the cannon was to

be used to conquer Oregon from the British; some said that it was to be used to seize California from the Mexicans; nobody knew exactly what the plans were, save that the trail was to lead across the mountains, and west by the Snake to the Columbia, surveying the overland route until it connected with the survey north and south along the Pacific Coast in California and Oregon, made by Lieutenant Charles Wilkes of the Navy in 1841.

To operate the cannon piece the lieutenant had engaged at St. Louis a regular cannoneer, by name of Zindel—Louis Zindel, who had been a non-commissioned officer of artillery in the Prussian army. Besides, in the company was a young negro man, named Jacob Dodson, not a slave, but free born, although in service to the family of Senator Benton, the lieutenant's father-in-law; two greenhorns, Mr. Theodore Talbot, government draughtsman of Washington, and Mr. Frederick Dwight, of Springfield, Massachusetts, who was making a tour to the Sandwich Islands by way of Vancouver; Mr. William Gilpin, also for Vancouver; and two Delaware Indians, old man and son. Then, here at St. Vrain, in the Fitzpatrick company, were two comrades of the 1842 expedition: Alexis Ayot and Baptiste Bernier, whom Oliver was glad to see. Five other members of the first expedition—Mr. Preuss, the bristly-headed German scientist, Basil Lajeunesse the fearless voyageur, Louis Ménard (a cousin of Max-

well), François Badeau and Raphael Proue—were south with the lieutenant.

Consequently, although Oliver felt somewhat disappointed that Henry Brandt and Randolph Benton were not to be along, he foresaw, by the preparations and by the make-up of the company, that it was going to be a tremendous trip.

A few days later, in rode Kit Carson with ten fine mules from Bent's Fort; and on the morning of July 23 in rode the lieutenant and party, including Jacob Dodson the negro youth, and Sergeant Zindel the artillerist, and Mr. Preuss, and Basil Lajeunesse. Lucien Maxwell was not with them. He had not come back from his trip after mules at Taos.

The lieutenant had left word at the Pueblo that he would wait at St. Vrain until the morning of the twenty-sixth. The morning of the twenty-sixth dawned, and no Maxwell had appeared. Evidently he was not coming. So the lieutenant ordered "Catch up!" and the company bustled for the start. At this moment arose a new complication. Lieutenant Frémont had decided that he ought to find a short cut from St. Vrain's Fort across the mountains to strike the Oregon Trail somewhere near the South Pass, instead of travelling up to Fort Laramie and then turning west for the Pass. Nobody at St. Vrain's could tell him of any trail except a danger-trail used mainly by hostile Indians. Such a trail did traverse northwest, to the Sweetwater; but it was being given

over to the Plains Indians when they raided the Utes and the Snakes, and to the Crows when they raided the Plains Indians, and only recently several trappers had been killed on it.

Thereupon, hearing the plans, the two Delawares announced that the mountains looked cold to them, the trail was beset with their enemies, they were far from their own people, and they were going home.

"Very well," said Lieutenant Frémont. "Let them go. We want only men. But we must find another hunter or two, to take their places."

"Godey'll sign up," advised Fitzpatrick. "You get him and you'll have somebody almost as good as Kit."

Alexander Godey was a young French trapper and trader at the post. Everyone seemed to like him; and although he put considerable time upon his long, wavy black hair, brushing it and dressing it with Indian care, none ventured to twit him about it. He was not a man to be twitted.

"How about him, Kit?" asked the lieutenant.

"A fine fellow," assured Kit, generously. "I don't know a better. Take him."

Whereupon Godey of the silky locks was engaged.

The Snake widow of a French trapper who had been shot in a Fourth of July celebration at the fort asked the lieutenant if she might not journey with the expedition as far as the Bear River, beyond the Green, so that she could join her own people; and she was accepted, and given a small tent.

The expedition made an imposing sight. The Frémont party numbered some forty men, as against the twenty-five of the previous year. The Carson party were fifteen. The Frémont men were armed with Hall flint-lock breech-loading rifles, which had been adopted by the army and were thought to be a fine gun; but the Carson men were better armed, with percussion-cap rifles, and with Colt revolving pistols. Besides the brass twelve-pounder, there was a baggage train of twelve two-wheeled carts and a light spring-wagon for the instruments, and six pack-horses loaded with the Snake squaw's household goods.

This was altogether too large an outfit with which to thread the danger-trail of the short-cut. Therefore Fitzpatrick the Bad Hand was directed to take the baggage train and about twenty-five of the men, and proceed by the customary trail from St. Vrain's Fort up to Fort Laramie; thence by the Oregon Trail west over the South Pass and on to the British Hudson Bay Company post of Fort Hall. The lieutenant and Kit Carson would take the rest of the company through by the short cut, and meet him at Fort Hall.

For his party the lieutenant chose Kit, and Charles Preuss the bristly-headed German, and Jacob Dodson the young colored man, and Louis Zindel the Prussian artillerist, Basil Lajeunesse and his brother François Lajeunesse, Baptiste Bernier, Louis Ménard, Raphael Proue, Baptiste Deroiser, François Badeau, Auguste Vasquez a Spanish Creole, and Henry Lee. The Snake

woman with her six packs (atop of one her two black-eyed, pretty little children) accompanied; and there were the Carson men.

The course from St. Vrain's fort was northwesterly, across a rolling country. On the third day William New announced, to Oliver his partner:

"Thar she air."

"What?"

"The Cache-à-la-Poudre, or Hide-the-Powder Creek. We follow her up, I reckon, into the mountains. Know why she has that name?"

"Trapper name," hazarded Oliver.

"Right. Thar war some Frenchmen hyar'bouts on the creek, five or ten year ago. Injuns got after 'em, an' they cached their powder under-ground, so's to save it. Don't know whether they ever found it ag'in or not, but they always referred to the creek as their 'Hide-the-Powder' creek, an' the name stuck."

The cavalcade turned up the creek, in the rain, and entered among rugged, lofty mountains, their wild ravines and steep slopes thickly covered with brush and flowers. The Cache-à-la-Poudre was crooked, and must be crossed and recrossed; the gun-carriage, overseen by the anxious Sergeant Zindel, and the spring wagon with its precious instruments, were hauled through each time.

Thus was traversed first by explorers and map-makers the Overland Stage Route from Denver to Salt Lake.

From the head of the Cache-à-la-Poudre they all passed over a ridge to the Laramie River side of the divide here; loomed high, bare and snowy on the west, the mighty Medicine Bow Mountains, which they must go around, and now they encountered a wide Indian trail and sign of Indian travel upon it.

XI

IN HOSTILE TERRITORY

So far the only traces of travel preceding had been those of Indian travel. This afternoon who should appear upon the trail but a large red ox! Had he been an elephant he would have created no keener interest, and both the Frémont party and the Carson party collected about him.

"Ma foi!" exclaimed François Badeau. "Mebbe we back in Missouri, hey?"

"That's shuah a big fine ox," commented Jacob Dodson. "Guess some o' those emigrants we saw at Kansas Landing are ahead of us."

"Not very close, Jacob," answered the lieutenant. "The Oregon Trail is a hundred and more miles north, yet."

"Seems to me this ox must have cut loose from his party at the Green, an' he's making a short cut back through the hills, for Missouri," decided Kit Carson.

With their red ox in charge the expedition proceeded. It seemed to Oliver rather mean to turn the brave animal about and make him retrace his trail; but in the morning he could not be found, and the lieutenant ordered the men not to look for him.

"Fact is," declared the lieutenant, to Kit, "I'm glad he got away. He's won his life, so far as we're concerned. I'd rather starve a while than kill the old fellow and eat him."

"Wall," drawled Kit, "we'll see if we can't do better than pore beef."

Whereupon, as if in reward, that evening he brought into camp a buffalo cow whose fat was two inches thick: the finest buffalo, asserted every man, that he ever had tasted.

To date the march had been not hard, and not unpleasant. The gun-carriage and the spring-wagon had come through without mishap. However, this next evening occurred the first accident, when, the company having crossed the North Platte River to the north of the Bull Pen or New Park, they were caught by the gathering dusk in a deep ravine, where grew sage six feet high. Both lamps of the spring wagon were knocked off, a thermometer was broken, and finally, at ten o'clock, camp was pitched in the dark. Supper was at midnight. Some of the men, who were out hunting buffalo, did not get in at all.

When they did come, in the morning, they brought much meat, and the lieutenant and Kit agreed that it would be wise to dry this meat, for a store against future need. There would be few buffalo, on the Pacific side of the Rockies.

Camp was moved down the ravine, to a cottonwood grove in a grassy little bottom-land upon the

bank of the Platte. In this open place between the river and the bluffs, pole frame-works were erected, on which to hang the strips of buffalo meat, above fires, to dry.

Louis Ménard was horse-guard. Fortunately, he had a quick eye, had Louis—and on a sudden the busy camp, with all hands at work "making meat," was startled by his loud shout, the "Whang!" of his Hall's carbine, and the tumultuous thud of hoofs as he raced his herd for the grove.

"Injuns! Des sauvages!" he yelled, pointing over his shoulder.

True enough. Down from the bluffs at the upper end of the bottom-land were galloping a score of half-naked Indians, while into the sky-line of the summit behind them were pouring many more.

"To the grove! To the grove!" cried French and Americans, Frémont and Carson men.

"The cannon!" ordered Sergeant Zindel, gutturally. "Qvick! Dis vay!"

All raced, afoot, for the grove, where Louis was driving his herd.

"R-r-round mit id!" gasped Sergeant Zindel.

The majority of the voyageurs and trappers instantly ranged themselves flat upon the ground, amidst the brush, or crouched behind trees, carbines and rifles at a ready. But the sergeant, and Jacob Dodson the colored man, and two others, remained out with the gun, before the grove. They were the cannoneers.

Lieutenant Frémont calmly walked forth, and stood by.

On dashed the red warriors—their robes and feathers flying, war bonnet and decorated braids streaming in the air. Brandishing bow and lance and gun and shield, with shrill yelps they now were charging across the level.

"Cheyenne an' 'Rapahoe," muttered William New. "Wagh! I wonder if they know what they're doing?"

Oliver anxiously watched the cannoneers. How rapidly they worked. Sergeant Zindel evidently understood his business. With jerky stiffness he bustled hither, thither—but already the piece had been swung about, to open down the bottom-land, a load in red flannel bag had been rammed home, and Jacob Dodson was thrusting after it a case of canister.

"R-r-ready!" ordered Sergeant Zindel, squinting along the breech, while Jacob turned the elevating screw. He sprang up, blowing a match or slow-fire fuse. "Back mit you! Back-vaaerts, all!" And Jacob and the two other helpers recoiled, out of range of the imminent explosion.

"The blame fools!" muttered William New, at the Indians. "They'll be blown to smithereens. Wagh! they will! It'll rain scalps."

The racing reds now were scarce two hundred yards away, charging madly, hammering their ponies' flanks with moccasined heel, urging to top speed.

"Feuer!" shouted stanch Sergeant Zindel, suddenly advancing his slow-match to touch-hole—and

Oliver's eyes leaped to see the enemy shrivel and scatter. But——

"Wait!" commanded Lieutenant Frémont, springing to arrest the sergeant's hand. And——

"Wait!" cried Kit Carson, running out, his hand high.

For just at the instant the Indians, as if they had noted whom they were charging, in mid-pace had hauled their ponies short, and ploughing up the sod had stopped in a jumbled mass of wildly tossing riders.

"Just in time, by thunder," exclaimed William New. "Another minute, an' thar'd 'a been more meat than buff'ler meat scattered about on this hyar bottom. Wagh!"

A single rider had come forward from the serried front of mounted warriors; Kit Carson strode right on, to meet him, and hold parley. The whites in the grove might breathe easier.

"Tonnerre!" was reciting Louis Ménard. "As I sat my horse, out there, I happened to glance at the bluff and saw an Injun stick his head up over. That was the good fortune; n'est-ce-pas?"

The sergeant, and his cannoneers, and the lieutenant, remained in the open beside the piece, awaiting the result of the parley. The sergeant occasionally blew upon his slow-match; and once he and Jacob hitched the gun around a few inches, for still better aim.

Presently Kit Carson turned back, and with him

came two chiefs. The other Indians followed, slowly, riding at ease; and many, dismounting here and there, squatted or strolled about, gradually forming a semicircle of seated forms.

" It's all right," announced Ike Chamberlain, standing at ease. " Kit's made the peace sign. Wall, they jest saved their scalps, I can tell 'em."

" We'd 'a bo'hd a thousand holes right through 'em; we shuahly would," declaimed Jacob Dodson.

" These air a war party o' Cheyennes an' 'Rapahoes," explained Kit Carson to the lieutenant. " They say they tuk us for Crow or Ute enemies—but being as they're on their way home after a licking up north an' consequently air feeling ugly, I reckon they tuk us for what they could get; an' that warn't much."

" It would have been more if they hadn't stopped when they did," answered the lieutenant. " I suppose now they want presents. We'll have to give them a little. Can't spare much—and they don't deserve even that."

The chiefs grunted and shook hands with the lieutenant; they cast curious glances at the brass cannon, and exchanged a guttural comment.

" They think that's heap gun," interpreted William New. " White man's medicine strong, they say."

The uninvited guests, squatting in expectant half-circle, like hungry but dignified mastiffs, willingly passed the pipe of peace around, and as willingly accepted tobacco and scarlet cloth and knives.

"They've been up ag'in the Snakes, over on the Green River," repeated William New, to Oliver, after having chatted with one or two. "They surprised a village near Jim Bridger's fort, while most o' the men folks were off on an antelope surround, an' carried away a few scalps an' a lot o' hosses. Most the hosses belonged to the fort. Wagh! I bet ye Bridger war mad! How-some-ever, 'fore this hyar war party got very fur, with their plunder, the Snakes overtuk 'em, seized the hosses, killed several warriors an' wounded some more. These Injuns warn't feeling very happy, coming home licked, an' they war on the ready for revenge o' any kind that happened. Red an' white scalps air alike to Injuns in that frame o' mind; everybody's an enemy. But look at that'ere Snake woman. She's b'iling under her blanket!"

Apart, secluded at the edge of the grove, with her blanket drawn entirely over herself and two children, crouched the Snake widow, motionless.

The band of Cheyennes and Arapahoes—two tribes who called one another cousin—stayed here until sunset; then they rode away; and then the Snake woman emerged from her blanket, and glaring after them shook her fist, at these the enemies of her people.

That night double guards were placed; however, the camp slept unmolested, here 200 miles from Fort St. Vrain.

The road this next day was very rough; and during the next day the roughness increased, with dense sage,

interminable, blocking the way. To the north uplifted a divide forming the Sweetwater Valley of the Oregon Trail. Therefore diverging from the west into the north, and abandoning the unseen trail over which, in less than a score of years, would hasten the stages from Denver to Salt Lake, the Frémont and Carson men marched across Great Divide Basin of southern Wyoming for the familiar country of the Sweetwater.

In a cold rain storm, the evening of August 9, they camped beside the Sweetwater River, about twenty miles above the famous Devil's Gate. From St. Vrain's Fort they had travelled 315 miles.

XII

THE EMIGRANT TRAIL

To be beside the friendly guiding Sweetwater was a great relief. Now the South Pass was only eighty or ninety miles west, with a plain trail connecting. But what a trail this had become, in a short year! So many wagons had traversed it—the hoofs of the oxen and of the horses all pointing west—that the tough sage-brush had been crushed flat in a great, winding furrow forever leading onward. Strange was it to come upon such a trail, in this wilderness of plain and butte more than a thousand miles from the frontier.

This morning, when daylight revealed the sudden highway, exclamations of astonishment ran through the camp and adown the column, as now the march was made so much easier.

"Wagh! The Snake woman says it air the great medicine road o' the whites," remarked William New.

"Looks to me as if all the folks in Missouri were moving out to Oregon," called back Ike.

"You would think so, if you had been with us at the start," responded Basil Lajeunesse, who was riding to chat with the Carson men. "Oregon and California both. Name of a dog! Until the trail forked and we

turned off for St. Vrain the Laramie route was a string of beads, so thick were wagons. That Doctor Whitman, he has stirred people up. One thousand for Oregon—men and women and the children—were collected at the Kansas, waiting for him."

"These air fresh sign," quoth Ike, with an eye upon the hoof marks and wheel tracks, and the freshly plucked springs where women and children must have wandered, picking nosegays.

"Lieutenant Frémont, he stirred people up, too," continued Basil, proudly. "It is 'South Pass,' 'South Pass,' everybody talk about 'South Pass,' so easy to cross. And the Congress talk, too, all about Oregon, and it say it will give to every American settler in Oregon six hundred forty acres of land and for his child one hundred sixty acres. I should like to go, myself, but I do not know as my family like to go."

"Some'll never get thar," grunted William New. "Thar's a grave, already. Wonder the wolves or the Injuns haven't dug it open yet. They will."

The South Pass was crossed. Still onward led the great trail. Occasionally at camping-spot or elsewhere relics were to be noted. Once Oliver found a ragged doll; and was seen again a hasty grave.

The Big Sandy creek, at the foot of the pass, where a year before the camp had been made ere turning north to climb the Peak, was left behind, and now ahead waited new country.

On August 15—

"Thar's the Green," announced Oliver's faithful mentor, William New. "We're pretty high in Mexican territory, too. Some say it reaches up this fur, west o' the mountains, along the Rio Verde. Seedskeedee River air what she's called by the Crows—which means peerairie-hen river."

The river was about 400 yards wide. The road forded it at a shallow place, and turned down along it. The current flowed among wooded islands.

That night, at camp, Lieutenant Frémont much discussed the river with Kit Carson and Basil Lajeunesse and Mr. Preuss and others.

"This must be the same as the Buenaventura, or Good-Fortune River of the early Spanish," asserted the lieutenant. "That is, if it has a branch emptying into the Pacific."

"Never heard of any," answered Kit Carson. "Did you, Basil?"

"Ma foi, not I," declared Basil, promptly. "But I never have been beyond, where lies the desert."

"Wall, I have," resumed Kit. "I've been west down the Mary's River to its end in the Sinks; and I've been on the lower end o' this hyar Green—or what mout be this hyar Green, whar it's called the Colorado."

"What's below, Kit?" queried the lieutenant, quickly. "I hear strange stories of fine valleys at the bottoms of canyons entered by a secret trail, and of

wonderful beaver grounds and ancient towns, shut in by walls a mile high."

"Wall," drawled Kit, "when I went out to Californy in Twenty-nine, with Captain Young, we struck the Colorado at a place whar the river'd sunk down into a canyon full a mile deep an' three mile acrost. We didn't get down into it, but I'm ready to believe that 'most anything could be found at the bottom. They call it the Grand Canyon, now. Injuns say thar's a heap more o' the same kind, up above, for three hundred mile."

"But did you ever hear anything about the Buenaventura River, flowing west instead of south, across the Great Basin and emptying into the Pacific Ocean?"

"Heard about it, but never saw it," stated Kit, "Never knew a trapper who did see it. O' course, Injuns give out all sort o' tales, an' you can't believe 'em."

"The early Spanish claimed such a river, did they not—draining a lake?" put in Mr. Preuss. "It is marked down on maps that I have seen."

"Yes," replied the lieutenant. "Now, if there is such a river, as the Buenaventura, connecting this central Great Basin with the Pacific Ocean of California, what a boon will it be! Boats could ascend the Arkansas, or the Platte, or the Missouri River, be carried across the mountains, and launching into the Buenaventura continue on to the coast!"

"A water-way across the continent," puffed Mr. Preuss. "That is good!"

"Bien, bien!" cried Basil.

From the Green the road crossed among hills, making westward for the Bear. Soon the Snake woman, with her two children and her six pack-horses, left to seek relatives at the trading post of old Jim Bridger, only a few miles away. And the next day Kit Carson spurred ahead, for Fort Hall, to engage provisions there, in case that the Thomas Fitzpatrick party, which should be somewhere on the way from Fort Laramie, might be running short or have met with misfortune.

However, that very evening provisions walked in of themselves—being a cow and her calf. They must have escaped from some emigrant party; and they were made more of even than had been the red ox—for the cow gave milk in abundance. Here was luxury: milk for coffee. So they took the mother and child along with them.

Early in the second morning thereafter the company entered the beautiful valley of what Ike and William and all said was the Bear River. Below but a short distance were the "Beer Springs" and the "Steamboat Spring"; and further below was the Great Salty Lake.

That they would visit the springs was certain, because the trail led past them; but whether they would

visit the lake was not so certain, although Basil, reporting to the Carson men, assured:

"We will. I think we will. I hear the lieutenant and Mr. Preuss talking so. That is why we brought again the boat."

"Boat!" snorted Ike. "Another o' them rubber contraptions?"

"Bien encore," confirmed Basil. "It is ready in the packs. Like the other but not so big."

"Humph!" grumbled William New. "Thought I smelt it!"

Oliver wished much to ask questions about the springs, but he knew that if he waited he would find out everything, whereas if he asked he would likely be filled with trapper yarns. Besides, it was the part of a greenhorn to put many foolish questions. However, William New did remark, as they rode along:

"That 'ere springs basin ahead'll make you think you're in the infernal regions. Red rock an' blue rock an' green trees, an' hot water an' cold, an' sulphur smells an' noises. Wagh!"

Emigrants, making a large and happy encampment, were passed; and still more, encamped or moving, their white-topped wagons showing finely. The men were dressed in flannel or calico shirts, jeans and boots; the women in calico; the children, chiefly barefoot, in material of various makeshift kinds: and everybody was happy and hopeful and well, eager to talk of "Oregon" or of "Californy."

"How far to Oregon, strangers?" asked one of the men.

"You're in it!" answered the lieutenant, laughing. "Anywhere above forty-two degrees latitude, west of the South Pass, is Oregon!"

Some Snake Indians, riding the trail, met the company and told the lieutenant that a large village of their fellows had just come in from antelope hunting and berry gathering, and were camped near by. These Snakes appeared to be open-hearted, friendly Indians. They shook hands with Ike and the other trappers; and as Oliver well knew, Snakes and trappers were good friends, always, united against the Blackfeet and the Sioux. In fact, the Indians west of the South Pass were to be counted upon as friendlies—except the Diggers.

"Watch out for the Diggers, or they'll slip an arrow into ye, sure," had warned William New.

So, this being Snake country, the lieutenant rode aside to pay a visit to the Snake village. But as they came in sight of it, a mile away in a pretty little bottom-land beside a stream, out from the cluster of skin lodges sped a horseman—and another, and another, and squad after squad, charging into the open, before.

"Look out, boys!" rang the voice of Lieutenant Frémont, galloping down the line. And—"Get that howitzer ready!" he ordered.

"Those Injuns 'most crazy, I think," muttered Basil, aiding the lieutenant.

"Wagh! Looks like we'll be gone beaver, if we don't watch out," called Ike. "What's the matter with the fools, I wonder."

The Snakes evidently were in battle array. They were fully armed, with bows and lances and guns; many were almost wholly naked, save for the great war bonnets which floated their red, yellow and white feathers far behind the racing horses. In a solid, yelling mass they came on, while in the village women and children scuttled into the brush. Suddenly, ere a shot had been fired, the foremost of the Snakes raised his hand; his warriors slackened, and he rode forward, to where the white men were formed for peace or war.

The Snake chief explained that his people had seen the flag, and that as their enemies the Sioux and the Blackfeet were accustomed to bear a flag of some kind they had supposed that this was an attack. He was glad that no shots had been fired, for the Snakes never had spilled the blood of a white man.

This explanation was satisfactory, and escorted by a dense throng of the Indians the Frémont and Carson men rode on to the Snake village.

The chief pointed out a spot, by the village, where the company should camp; and then in a loud voice announced to the Indians that the white chief wished to buy horses. Many speedily were driven up by their

owners, and for beads and tobacco and knives and red and blue cloth eight were taken over.

The kettles were on the lodge fires, as always is the case in an Indian camp. The atmosphere was filled with a peculiar odor. Ike and William New and the other Carson trappers, and some of the Frémont men also, sniffed as if pleased; and Oliver sniffed, but pretended not to be curious. This odor was like to decayed apples—and evidently so thought Mr. Preuss the bristly-headed, red-faced German, as he bustled about.

"What is that? Rotted apples!" he exclaimed, wrinkling his nose disgustedly. "Where do you suppose these Snakes got apples. I declare!"

"That smell?" responded Ike. "That's kooyah. That's the finest grub out: kooyah root. Hyar—try some."

A squaw was bringing, evidently as a gift, a steaming platter of yellowish substance that might have been mashed sweet-potatoes; she presented it to Ike with a smile. Mr. Preuss took some upon the point of his hunting-knife. He gingerly tasted it.

"Ugh!" he spat. "Tastes worse than it smells. What do you call it, you say?"

"Kooyah root. But what's the matter with yuh—wasting good food like that. I tell 'ee, it air prime fodder; it air prime, baked or b'iled, an' with that in yore meat-bag you can travel fur."

"The most horrid stuff I ever put in my mouth," retorted Mr. Preuss, as he left.

The Carson men afterwards learned that the chief sent to the Frémont lodge, where Mr. Preuss also had quarters, a kettle of the kooyah as a compliment, and that the German was driven by it into the open air. During the march through the Snake country the camps made sport for themselves by slyly sticking some of the kooyah messes under Mr. Preuss' nose; whereat he always fled.

However, all the others, even the lieutenant, liked the kooyah, which was called in English "tobacco root," and in scientific language, according to the lieutenant and Mr. Preuss, "valerian."

The Oregon emigrant trail led westward, down the Bear, between high hills and through immense areas of blue flax now going to seed. Along the trail were travelling, at irregular intervals, squads of emigrants, with their wagons and cattle, either camping or on the move for the day's march. The main caravan was still some distance ahead, under personal leadership of Dr. Whitman.

"Yonder, over that fust ridge," directed William New, to Oliver, at their next mess fire, "air the Beer Springs an' the Steamboat Spring. Wagh! That'll surprise ye—an' it'll give that German something to think of besides kooyah."

"Do they taste?" queried Oliver.

"Taste, boy! Thar's a heap o' tastes! But that

Beer Spring group air fine. O' course they air a drink that don't hurt ye; but we trappers claim they make you feel like dancing Injun, jest the same. I 'xpect it air the gas, tickling yore insides. If all the drinks in the world war no wuss'n these hyar Beer Springs, made by nature, the world'd be better off. So don't think, 'cause we old-timers named 'em in fun, that thar's anything wrong with 'em. Sody Springs they're called, too."

The springs were located in a basin enclosed by a semicircle of rugged mountain-crests, on the one hand, and by the river on the other. First, pieces of lava were to be noted, beside the trail; then came the springs themselves—hundreds of them, bubbling and welling from the green and red and white and yellow ground. Many of them had made little cones, of bright colors; and even the current of the river boiled and frothed with the gas.

Everybody quaffed deeply of the waters, which sparkled and bubbled, clear and luke-warm, from the rocks and the tufts of grass.

"Hi yah! Hi yah!" capered William New, ridiculously. "Hyar's doings! This chile wants to dance. Hi yah!"

But he was only pretending, after the fashion of the place.

If anybody was not satisfied with a spring, all he had to do was to walk a few steps, and dig with his heel or with a stick, and he would open up a new spring

—sometimes with a slightly different taste. Down stream about half a mile was the most remarkable spring of all: the Steamboat Spring. From a red crack in a rock right at the bank of the river, and beside the trail, spurted a jet of steamy water, rising and falling; a couple of yards from it, from a small round hole puffed jets of steamy air; and water and air together made a noise like the sighing "choo choo!" of a steamboat.

XIII
TO THE GREAT SALTY LAKE

"Now I wonder," mused William New, "what that 'ere lieutenant's planning next. S'pose you jest take a little walk over to t'other camp an' see."

"Why?" asked Oliver.

It was noon, and only a short distance from the camp at the Beer Springs, on the day before, the expedition had again halted.

"'Cause this air the jumping-off place. If we follow the trail, we go on northwest for Fort Hall, 'bout fifty miles down the Portneuf to the Snake. If we follow the B'ar, we turn sharp south, for the lake, which air more'n two hundred miles. An' I 'xpect that's what we do," he exclaimed. "Yon goes that fellow Lee, lickity. Bet you he's an express to Fort Hall, to tell Kit."

A horseman had dashed away from the Frémont quarters, to disappear down the trail. His own curiosity aroused, Oliver obediently strode across to the Frémont camp. He met François Lajeunesse, who was visibly excited.

"What's up, Francois?"

"We go to the Great Salty Lake," informed Fran-

çois, who was brother to Basil. "The lieutenant, he would explore the Great Salty Lake—perhaps sail on it. He has sent Henri Lee to tell Kit Carson to come back quick from Fort Hall, with provisions."

"Have you ever been there, François?"

"I? Never! Nor Basil, either. No, not anybody in the whole company. But I have heard of it. It is true—a great salty lake, with not an outlet and with fresh water flowing into it!"

Oliver hastened back to spread the news.

"Wagh!" murmured William New, satisfied. "That lake air thar, but it's pore beaver country, an' I never cared to fool with it. It war discovered in winter o' Twenty-four an' Five by old Jim Bridger, to settle a dispute as to whar the B'ar emptied. Jim set out in a skin canoe from trapper winter-camp in Cache Valley, below hyar, an' he went fur 'nough to see the lake an' taste it too. He said it war part o' the Pacific Ocean; an' trappers believed that till in spring o' Twenty-six four o' Cap'n Bill Sublette's men found it ag'in an' paddled 'round its edge looking for beaver streams. Didn't discover any, an' so the lake warn't any use. Don't believe even Kit's paid much attention to it."

During the rest of this day, and through the evening, there was constant talk of the Great Salty Lake. Everybody, French and American, was highly interested in reaching it. Provisions were so low that

Henry Lee had been despatched to hasten Kit Carson from Fort Hall; however, the little cow and her calf were still on hand, for emergency, and this very day two more calves were picked up, where they had strayed from some emigrant outfit.

The emigrant trail left the Bear, and continued on to the northwest; but the Bear itself turned short, at right angle, and flowed for the south. It was to be the guide to the Great Salty Lake, and the march of the expedition turned with it.

Only some 200 miles before awaited the lake—a mysterious, desolate place, according to reports; as large as a sea, connecting with the ocean by means of a tremendous whirl-pool in its centre that sucked all creatures down, and containing islands inhabited by giants with enormous clubs. Indians said that such clubs had been found, on the shore, after storms!

Cranes were seen flying, as if the lake might be close; but they evidently were only seeking a slough which bordered the river a few miles beyond. Here were quantities of geese and ducks, but very wild and unaccommodating. The arrival of Kit Carson, with supplies, was eagerly looked for.

The lieutenant and Basil Lajeunesse, exploring ahead, following an Indian trail which turned west from the Bear came upon more Snake Indians, who by sign talk said that this trail would lead to a fine broad valley running north and south. As the route along

the Bear was hilly and swampy, the march was changed to this trail. It conducted through a beautiful little pass, where between twain huge gates of solid rock, amidst flowers and shrubs and many tender trees rippled merrily a pure mountain stream—civilly leaving space for guests to enter and depart.

The pass formed a little valley, long and narrow; adown it came riding a gaily bedecked squaw, with half a dozen dogs; thrown into sudden terror by the spectacle of this white man's cavalcade she raced away as fast as her horse could carry her. Because of a singular rock column, planted almost in the centre of the little valley, the place was named the Pass of the Standing Rock.

Beyond the Pass of the Standing Rock was encountered another village of the Snakes. When the lieutenant wished to trade for roots, the Indians opened their blankets and showed him how bony were their bodies.

"If we sell to you, we shall starve; see, how thin we are, already!"

So that night there was nothing left to do but to kill the faithful little cow; and this was ordered.

The Shoshonies or Snakes of the village said that the great salty water was only two sleeps south. The next day the march arrived at the Roseaux or Reed River, which is separated from the Bear by a mountain ridge; and down the Roseaux they turned. In the

midst of the cold rain, this night, entered their camp a cringing, starved dog with a bullet-wound in his side. Oliver made much of him, and fed him some scraps and let him sleep on the foot of the buffalo-robe.

The water of the River of Weeds, which is known also as the Malade, or Sick River, tasted salty, as if in token that the lake was near. Through a canyon in the divide the Bear River broke through into the valley, and presently the two rivers joined, with the expedition caught in the angle between them. The country was growing more and more mysterious, with much reeds and cane growth and willow thickets, and flight of water-fowl. In the distance ahead the valley opened wide; above the level line of the swamps rose several hazy outcrops, like enchanted islands floating upon the horizon. And islands they indeed were: for the level line was the basin of the great lake.

Now the rubber boat was unpacked. It was not so ill-smelling as the rubber boat of last summer, and was in the shape of a canoe about eighteen feet long. The gunwales and the bows must be inflated, to stiffen the boat. Although Ike and William New and other Carson men, and some of the Frémont men also, viewed the craft askance, and poked fun at it, right here it came in very handy, for by it was all the camp baggage ferried across the mouth of the Roseaux; even the cannon was thus carried. The men and the horses swam.

Taking the bold Basil Lajeunesse as companion, the lieutenant re-embarked in the boat, for a voyage down the Bear. He thought it possible that in this way he would reach the lake. His company were to continue on, by land.

As the lieutenant and Basil, in the frail boat, disappeared around the first bend of the reedy channel there was grave shaking of heads over the venture.

"The seams are only pasted when they should have been sewed. It is a weaker boat than that of last year."

"Thar air critters in the swamps lower down that'll swallow boat an' all, 'cording to Injun say."

"Sech doin's don't shine with this coon. He wishes he war back at old Touse, he does."

"Ma foi! Suppose they two come to the place where the river runs from under them so that they sink in the mud! And then the people with web feet like ducks will get them!"

The march proceeded, down along the course of the Bear. All day, by horse and foot, tugging the spring-wagon and the gun-carriage, they plodded. Gradually the country changed, becoming more and more desolate and forbidding. In places the river seemed to be higher than the surface upon either side: sluggishly rolling between banks like welts it spread out into salt marshes harboring thousands of water fowl—ducks, geese, cranes, herons, pelicans, gulls, curlew, plover.

Where the water had evaporated under the sun the bare soil gleamed white, and was covered with small shells. Only a few twisted shrubs and short blackened willows rose above the drear, dead expanse.

Late in the afternoon the camp was pitched among willow clumps. The lieutenant and Basil had not appeared, and nothing had been seen of the boat. Many were the dire predictions, and François, Basil's brother, was well-nigh frantic. Over the wide salt swamps the sun set strangely yellow, his glow casting a ghastly light upon all objects. But a cheer rang forth, for trudging along the river came the lieutenant and Basil.

They were wet and tired and hungry. The boat had moved slowly upon the heavy current which swept along in a winding course of many curves and doublings; so finally they had left the craft behind cached in some willows, and clambering out upon the bank had trailed the company afoot, for three hours.

At three o'clock in the morning Basil started back, with a small party, all on horseback, to get the boat; they returned in the afternoon, bringing not only the boat but some roots and bear-meat for which they had traded with the Diggers.

"Shoshonies and Shoshokies—they air same Injuns made different by the way they live," declared William New to Oliver. "You see, when they air rich an' have hosses, like the Snakes, they call themselves Shoshonies; an' when they air pore an' miser'ble

an' go afoot, they air called Shoshokies. Out on the desert, west o' hyar, these Root Diggers air so pore they wear a rabbit-skin for winter blanket, an' they eat beetles an' grass-hoppers an' rats. Wagh! But they use p'isened arrows, an' they're wuss in a fight than bigger Injuns."

As the march proceeded the water-fowl increased, until when disturbed they arose with fast flutter of wings that boomed like thunder. Soon the blind trail was cut by an impassible morass through which drained the water of the river. Here camp must be made. They decided that this was the mouth of the Bear, and that now the great lake began; but they could not see over the willows and rushes, they could not advance, and therefore they must turn back and seek better approach.

Ten days had passed since Henry Lee had left on the emigrant trail for Fort Hall, to carry word to Kit Carson. Kit had not come, and some of the men were beginning to grumble over the lack of provisions. To be sure, for the last two or three days there had been plenty of ducks and geese and plover; but the birds were wild and to hunt them down, in the marshes, was hard work. Why didn't Carson get in, with grub? Maybe he wasn't coming at all; maybe he was lost, or the Injuns had stampeded him.

"You fellows don't know Kit," reproved Ike. "He'll come, straight an' quick, if he got the word."

"With me, Carson and truth are the same thing," asserted Lieutenant Frémont. "I have found that you can depend on him absolutely."

And hurrah! This very morning, as the camp was packing to turn back, in rode Kit, with a pack-animal.

He had done the best that he could, but he had brought only a little flour, and a moderate quantity of lesser provisions.

"Fitzpatrick hadn't come in, yet," announced Kit; "but the fort's alive with emigrants. They've all collected thar, holding a pow-wow, whether to go on with their wagons an' cattle, or with packs. Jest as I left, that man Whitman arrived, from down the trail, an' he war making a speech, telling 'em he'd take 'em through, wagons an' all, or bust. Anyway, they've stripped the post o' supplies."

All were glad to see Kit again; and he was eager to see the lake. The new trail wound along the bases of the range of hills on the east, until it turned into a gorge or canyon from which issued a river—the Weber River, with sparkling current flowing rapidly between high wooded banks. The cavalcade left the trail, and followed the river, for the mystic lake.

Camp must be made before the lake was sighted. The next morning the march was resumed, this time straight for a shoulder or butte which rose plain in view across the open, brushy flat. And on this morning of September 6, 1843, climbing the butte the

breathless company—Boy Oliver no more excited than Lieutenant Frémont or Kit Carson themselves—gazed out over the Great Salty Lake, at last.

Silent it lay, sluggishly heaving, its shores uninhabited and bare. No city of Ogden anear floated upon the clear air the smoke plumes of man's supremacy; no Mormon plough had yet stirred the soil by the River Jordan, nor had Mormon trowel laid a single brick of the capital of the State of Utah. The lonely waves washed heavily the whitened lonely beach; the wide lonely surface was broken by but two or three high rocky islands, blue in distance. Beyond, at the far extremity of this inland sea, lifted vague peaks; eyries from whose lofty crags as from a watch-tower peered abroad the couchant genie of the place.

Kit Carson, his weather-beaten face sober, from the saddle scanned intently. As he stood leaning upon his rifle, Lieutenant Frémont's bold blue eyes flashed with triumph, and his hawk-nose jutted the more dominantly. Scarcely a word was spoken. All were too excited and too absorbed to cheer.

Then, as they gazed, down from those eyries beyond swooped in guise of big black clouds (as in the Arabian Nights) the guardians of this secret spot. They poured from the distant mountain-tops across the darkening water, and with furiously swirling draperies covered islands and everything.

"Wagh!" muttered William New. "Better be getting out o' hyar! Spirits air angry."

TO THE GREAT SALTY LAKE

" We'll make camp in that first grove, up the river," said Lieutenant Frémont. " And to-morrow we'll put things in shape for a trip on the lake. There's a lot of work to be done, in the way of surveying it."

Driven backward by the thunder-storm, they retired to a grove of great poplars, about nine miles inland from the butte.

XIV

SAILING THE INLAND SEA

THE night settled clear and calm, with scarce a breath of air to sough through the pendent leaves of the stately poplars. But the moonlit atmosphere was rife with strange sighings and moanings and whisperings, as from the ghostly lake out of sight below the camp. These sounds may have been water-fowl; William New and other trappers and voyageurs in both parties said that they were "spirits" and "medicine"; Jacob Dodson, the young colored man, said that they were "mighty like ha'nts"; and the wounded dog, which now was recovering, whined and shivered and snuggled closer upon Oliver's buffalo robe.

In spite of the sounds real and imaginary the camp was safe and whole at day-break. The lieutenant put everybody at work cutting timber with which to make a horse-pen and a fort. In the midst of these preparations Ike Chamberlain sought out Kit Carson, and addressed him freely.

"Say, Kit, what's the meaning o' this hyar? Must be going to stay awhile."

"Going to stay till the lieutenant gets through, Ike."

"Wall, he's not our boss. We're an independent consarn."

"I reckon you are, Ike. So what's the matter?"

"We've 'bout decided that staying hyar an' living on roots an' feathers whilst a crazy man measures that thar lake doesn't shine with us fellows. Thar air no fur an' no meat hyar, an' snow air creeping down the hills. We want to get out whilst we can."

"I won't stop you, Ike."

"You come too."

"Not an inch. I engaged to Lieutenant Frémont, an' I'm going through."

"On that 'ere lake, in that 'ere boat, Kit?"

"I shorely am, Ike, if the lieutenant asks me to."

"Don't you do it, Kit, don't you do it," implored Ike, much concerned. 'Thar's a whirlpool that'll swallow you, boat an' all. If the lake has nary river draining it off, how does it keep from overflowing, with these rivers running in! Must drain by a whirlpool, which sucks the water off fast as it comes in. Mebbe thar air cannibals on those islands, to gobble ye soon as ye land. Besides, whar's the grub for the crowd? What you fetched down from Hall is 'bout gone already, an' we'll soon be living wuss'n Root Diggers. When the snows fall lower we'll be shut in to starve. 'Tain't a fit country for white man; 'tain't, Kit. We're going to pull out, an' you'd better come with us. If that lieutenant wants to stay an' make figgers, let him."

"Go if you want to, Ike. I stay with Frémont," answered Kit Carson, evenly. "He expects me to, and I will. I can't ask you Touse men to. There won't be much fun in it, for you, especially if we push on for the coast by winter trail down the Snake."

"What!" gasped Ike. "Jest to get figgers? No, siree. I reckon we'll pack back through the mountains, whar thar's fur an' meat, for Laramie, Kit."

"All right, Ike. When you get to Touse tell Josefa I'm well." And Kit turned away.

Oliver heard this conversation, and was aghast. Back to Taos? Never! He hastened after Kit and appealed to him:

"Do I have to go, Kit?"

"Whar, boy?"

"Back, with Ike and the rest."

"Reckon you'd better. Times air liable to be hard on the trail, an' we're bound through to Vancouver."

"But I want to stay, Kit. I'll feed myself—I'll do my own foraging—I'd just as soon eat roots, I like 'em. I want to stay, with you and Lieutenant Frémont—and sail on the lake—and go to the coast. I'm not afraid."

"Not afraid to explore that 'ere lake in that rubber contraption, an' get swallowed by a whirlpool, mebbe?"

"No," declared Oliver, stanchly.

"Wall," smiled Kit Carson, his clear gray-blue eyes twinkling, "if Ike an' the rest should happen to

ride off an' you shouldn't be with 'em, I s'pose we'd have to keep you, best we could. You've got yore dog, to eat."

To the wise a word is sufficient. Ike and William New and all the Carson squad swiftly packed, to take the trail. The Frémont men cast sidelong glance as they proceeded with their own duties, and some, amidst the bantering, hinted that they would like to go, too. But they were under orders: enlisted for this United States Army service. The Taos men were free trappers, enlisted not at all.

"Ready, boy?" called William New, to Oliver.

"I want to wait and see the boat start," answered Oliver. "Go on; I can trail you."

"You'd better do it in a hurry, then," grumbled William New, as he mounted. "We're heading for beaver an' buff'ler, an' we travel fast."

Without another word off they rode, two by two, at trapper rack or single-foot; and following up the Weber Fork they disappeared among the hills.

Oliver sauntered about, and at the first opportunity took a hand in rolling logs.

"Aren't you going, boy?" demanded Lieutenant Frémont, suddenly noting him.

"No, sir."

"Why not? Wouldn't they take you?"

"Yes, sir; but I'd rather stay with you and Kit."

"Oh, I see." And the lieutenant, out of careworn bearded face, eyed him calculatingly.

"I'd like to sail in the boat, on the lake, if there's room," ventured Oliver. "I wouldn't be afraid."

"I don't know about that," said the lieutenant. "I don't know but what you'd better go on up to Fort Hall with François and party. I'm sending them, in a minute or two, so as to cut down the drain on the supplies."

"I'd—like—to—stay," faltered Oliver. "Kit said I could eat my dog—but maybe I won't have to."

"You're liable to eat worse than dog, if you do stay," warned the lieutenant, with a sudden smile lighting his countenance. And he added: "But stay you shall. You're a brave lad, and I like courage."

The horse corral and the little fort, both of cottonwood or poplar trunks, were finished; and in the latter was mounted the battered but faithful brass howitzer. Nobody might tell yet how many Indians, perhaps Utes, perhaps Snakes, perhaps Root Diggers, perhaps strangers more savage, might be spying and planning attack upon these few invaders; so precautions were taken. This being done, François Lajeunesse and some others were told off by the lieutenant, to go back up the Bear and on to Fort Hall, there to wait.

After François and companions left, the Carson-Frémont camp on the Weber River consisted of the lieutenant and Kit, Basil Lajeunesse, Baptiste Bernier, Baptiste Derosier, François Badeau, Mr. Preuss, Jacob Dodson the young colored man, and Oliver. Sergeant

Zindel had started with the François squad, but Jacob knew how to handle the gun.

The day was spent in patching and strengthening the rubber boat, in making scientific observations, and in exploring the country near at hand. The sunset was beautiful, orange and green, reflected in the waters of the great lake—a sunset so peculiar that it might have been enchantment by a wizard, testing his spells after the frowns of the genie had failed. However, nobody was afraid of the wizard, and the supper of yampa roots and a fat duck which Jacob had shot tasted good. The spells by a stout heart are much stronger than any spells by any wizard.

It was planned that the next day a voyage should be made to the nearest of the islands. Neither Kit Carson nor Lieutenant Frémont put much stock in tales of whirlpool and ravenous monsters and club-bearing giants—although, of course, who could say! But they hoped to find upon the islands flowers and fruits and crystal streams and much game, never before witnessed by human being.

Jacob, and François Badeau and Baptiste Deroiser had been named to garrison the little fort. After an early breakfast the lieutenant and Kit, Mr. Preuss and Basil and Baptiste Bernier busied themselves in packing the boat, tied to the river-bank, with blankets and scientific instruments and three rubber bags of water and a little food.

" Wall, boy," remarked Kit Carson, with a twinkle,

eyeing Oliver, who lingered near, "looks as though you'd better stay ashore."

"What's that?" queried the lieutenant, overhearing. "Oh, I guess we can make room. By all means. He climbed the highest peak, and I think he ought to be one to explore the enchanted islands. Come along, lad. You can pump the bellows and keep her blown up."

And Oliver needed no second invitation.

The sun was just appearing over the mountain ranges in the east when, on this the eighth of September, the rubber canoe left her moorings and started down the river, for the lake. The men paddled; Oliver was set at work pumping air into the inflated cylinders, along gunwales and bows, for they leaked.

It was a delightful voyage. Frequently, at warning hiss from the paddlers before, they all floated silently, in order to get a shot at a duck or goose; to shoot it in the head, of course, if possible. These pauses, and the halts to pick up the game, consumed time, so that when the river channel opened out upon the lake-shore evening was near.

At the lake-shore the river made a kind of swamp, traversed in several places by a shallow, slow current. The boat stuck in the mud, and its crew must get out and shove her and haul her along, in mud to their knees. Finally, at a little point of dry land, amidst willows and reeds, where there was plenty of drift-wood, camp was made. The supper menu was roasted

ducks and plover and geese—and the breakfast menu was the same.

All night the hoarse voices of wild-fowl, in marsh and upon lake, kept the air vibrant with multitudinous sound. However, upon their low beds of willow-branches and rushes the little camp by the unknown inland sea slept safely, until, at the first touch of pink in the eastern sky, the cheery tone of Lieutenant Frémont aroused with "Leve, leve!"—the trappers' signal to arise.

This was the day for the voyage upon the salty lake. Oliver felt a strange wonderment and exhilaration: he felt like crying "Hooray!" The lieutenant was all energy, and even Kit Carson was more talkative than customary, while Mr. Preuss scarcely chewed his food before swallowing it—so excited was he. But Basil and Baptiste were unusually quiet, even to seeming downcast.

"What's the matter with you two boys—you and Baptiste?" demanded the lieutenant, of Basil. "Are you afraid, so soon?"

"No, monsieur lieutenant," responded Basil. "Only, we have had a bad dream, Baptiste and I. It means evil. Now, if we could but postpone the voyage until to-morrow—— To-day is unlucky."

"Nonsense!" reproved the lieutenant. "Did you dream, Kit?"

"Oh," said Kit, "sometimes I have bad dreams an' sometimes I have good dreams; an' sometimes after

the bad dreams I have the best luck, an' sometimes after the good dreams I have the worst luck. So I've come to depend more on what I do when I'm awake than on what I do when I'm asleep."

"Anybody can dream, but it takes a man to do," spoke the German, Mr. Preuss.

"Well, I sha'n't govern our operations by dreams, or we're liable not to get anywhere," avowed the lieutenant. "When we come back from the islands we'll laugh at Basil and Baptiste."

"Oh, we go too," said both. But they did not brighten up much.

Only a short distance beyond the place of the camp the river channels were lost in a great mud-flat covered by an inch or so of water. Now everybody stripped to the skin, to haul the boat to the lake, beyond. At the sight of these strange white creatures the long-legged plover with which the flat swarmed circled and screamed. The mud was about the texture of paint, and when stirred up smelled disgustingly, as if composed of decaying insects. Speedily the crew were smeared with the black liquid to the thighs. Behind them they left a long, discolored, greasy trail.

The unpleasant mud extended for a mile, when suddenly they came to a little ridge, hard and distinct, rising underfoot. Here the mud stopped; beyond the little ridge, which acted as a divide, was firm sandy bottom, and very salt water—the bottom and the water of the great lake.

Now with a cheer they hastily dressed, clambered aboard, and launched forth—Oliver pumping with the bellows.

The nearest island seemed to be a low one, rising to a flat-top instead of to a regular peak. For this was the boat directed.

The frail rubber boat rode easily the swells of the light-green, clear water. The pasted seams held well; the inflated sides and ends lifted her high. But in a short time she looked queer indeed, as if riding a snow-storm; for when the swells broke against her they sprayed salt which turned white in the drying air. It covered her and her crew, and of Lieutenant Frémont, with his full beard, it made a hoary old man.

"There's a current setting southward; see how the foam patches all drift one way?" said Mr. Preuss.

"Ma foi! It is the whirlpool sucking at them!" muttered Baptiste, tremulously.

"Paddle hard," encouraged the lieutenant.

Kit had been peering keenly ahead, at the island. He spoke sharply.

"Captain (he called the lieutenant 'captain,' which was according to trapper custom), what are those yonder? Just take a look with the glass, won't you?"

All gazed, half alarmed, while Lieutenant Frémont levelled his long telescope. Between the boat and the island was a peculiar fringe of changing white.

"Oh! Those are only waves, Kit," announced the

lieutenant. "They're breaking to white-caps. Must be a breeze coming. Beyond still, on the shore of the island, is a row of pelicans, I think."

The breeze soon struck the boat. Riding high, it made yet slower headway, but it showed no symptoms of capsizing. A good little craft she was.

"Pump, boy," bade Kit. "Those thar tanks leak wuss'n ever."

And Oliver plied the bellows.

The breeze, fierce and constant as if the wizard or the genie was blowing with the breath to defeat the rash intruders, swept directly from the island, until, shut off by the rocks, it apparently ceased, and the water was smooth. The row of pelicans proved to be only rocks whitened by salt.

Now in a few minutes the rubber canoe was gliding through transparent shallows, and was about to land at the shelving, level shore.

"We'll have to carry her up before she touches, boys," spoke the lieutenant, leaping overboard, to his waist. "These sharp rocks will punch a hole in her."

Overboard sprang all, and hustling the baggage ashore carried the fragile craft after it.

No giants opposed their landing; no huge figures rushed from the high sage, and flourished clubs, to clear the beach. The stretch of shore exhibited no foot-print, of human, or inhuman, or even of beast. Save the wash of the waves and the whisk of the wind

not a sound arose. By all evidence, the island was a desert island, uninhabited.

From its high point, where its rocks rose to about 800 feet, the party surveyed its whole surface. Salt and a gigantic species of greasewood (the only "giant" thing); another, whitish shrub, some prickly pear, etc., were the only inhabitants of the island; salt was deposited in every crevice and pool; two birds flew from the mainland, on brief visit; that was all. And because of the disillusion where they had hoped to find fruits and flowers and game and sparkling streams, they christened the island Disappointment Island. Into a rock of the peak the lieutenant chiselled with his knife a cross; and by the rock he accidentally left the brass cap of his telescope.

That night each man (including Oliver) made himself a little shelter-lodge out of the abundant drift-wood on the shore, and with feet to the large fires lay down for slumber. There was no need of any sentry, nor of hand upon gun. The island was perfectly safe. To be enabled to sleep without a fear was novel experience, and was worth the trip.

During the night the wind increased again; and once Lieutenant Frémont said that the waves sounded like the surf of the ocean.

In the morning the waves were running high; the warders of the great lonely lake had still not given up the fight. Now the wind was from the opposite direc-

tion, or off shore, trying to keep the boat to the island! So again must the crew paddle hard, while Oliver pumped with the bellows; the lake was rougher than on the day before; the rubber strained and the ribs creaked, and Basil and Baptiste croaked dire "I told you so." Nevertheless, at noon the shore was reached, before the promontory butte, and with a glad shout of exultation and relief they all leaped into the shallows, to carry baggage and craft high and dry.

But the efforts of the angered lake-guardians were not spent. While harder blew the gale, it shifted, and presently it was rolling the lake itself farther and farther upon the shore! The temporary camp had been placed about a quarter of a mile from the edge; but across the mud flat came creeping the water. When Mr. Preuss arrived with horses from the main camp up the river there was just time to pack and mount and ride, before the tide had covered the spot. When they looked back, the lake was busy wiping out all traces of their intrusion upon its shores. However, upon the island in its midst was the chiselled cross, and the brass cap of the telescope. Another army man, Captain Howard Stansbury, also of the Topographical Corps, in 1849 found the cross, but not the brass cap; the Mormon settlers of the lake shore had called the island Castle Island; he named it Frémont Island.

Across a low, sandy, salty plain the late crew of the

rubber boat rode for the log fort. The foiled wizard or genie who seemed to dwell in those mountains across the water pursued them with a thunder-storm, but they outstripped it, and welcomed gladly by the salute of Jacob's howitzer they entered the friendly grove.

XV

ON TO THE COLUMBIA

"You say that the emigrants were going on, wagons and all, Kit?" queried the lieutenant.

"That war the plan. Whitman said he'd get 'em through, an' they'd need their goods an' cattle at t'other end."

The little company were on the back trail for Fort Hall. As Ike Chamberlain had warned, already winter was creeping down the mountain-sides, with his banners of white ever investing closer the lowlands. Even while the explorers had been encamped near the lake, the snows seemed to have increased upon the crests of the Wasatch Range, overhead. It was a thousand long miles to the end of the trail at Vancouver upon the lower Columbia; therefore Lieutenant Frémont and Kit Carson agreed that to put in more time hereabouts was hazardous.

In the afternoon of the second day following the voyage to Disappointment Island the march was begun, up the Bear and the River of Weeds, for Fort Hall, six days' travel with the baggage.

Once more the talk drifted to the amazing pilgrimage of Oregon emigrants, and the great concourse of them at Fort Hall, before Kit had left.

"The Hudson Bay people's policy would be to discourage settlers, anyway," mused the lieutenant. "With settlers in there tilling the ground and showing the Indians and the Canadians that farming paid better than fur-hunting, the Company's business would suffer."

"Yes," drawled Kit; "an' this hyar emigration, if it goes through, will put more Americans than thar air British in the Oregon country; an' if thar's anything in settlement of a country it'll mean a big help to the United States."

"It surely will," affirmed the lieutenant. "Success in life and in battle means getting there first, and sticking."

The route to Fort Hall followed up the Roseaux or River of Weeds from its juncture with the Bear to its sources. Here galloped into camp a horseman from the north—Baptiste Tabeau, of the Thomas Fitzpatrick party. Baptiste, shaking hands right and left, brought the news that the White Head, with all well, was but a short distance across country, encamped at Hall. Baptiste had been despatched southward, to meet the lieutenant.

Excited by promise of flour and rice and dried meat and butter, the Frémont camp slept little this night, and early in the morning, which was September 16, started onward. In the afternoon of September 18, emerging from the hills, with a cheer they greeted the sight of a green valley set amidst a sombre sage plain,

and beside the sparkling Portneuf River which watered it, the white walls of a trading post. This was the British Hudson Bay Company post of Fort Hall, on the Portneuf, a mile above the Snake itself, in the Plains of the Snake.

Thomas Fitzpatrick, his boyish ruddy face glowing from its frame of oddly white hair, came to meet them.

"How are supplies?" asked the lieutenant, at once.

"I've saved all I could. We've been on short rations. But the post is 'bout as poor as when Kit left it. Emigrants cleaned it out. Beef and butter is what you'll get; that's all."

"Where are the emigrants? Don't see any."

"Gone; wagons, cattle, women, children and all. Left a few steers and oxen, in trade; but they took most of their stuff right along."

"Do you think they can get through, with their wagons, Fitzpatrick?" queried the lieutenant.

"If anybody but that missionary doctor was leading them, I would say not," replied the Broken Hand. "Why, even the Fort Hall people don't try to fetch in their goods on wheels; they canoe it from Vancouver, for two hundred miles, then they use pack animals for the land trail, up along the Snake to the post. I agree with Captain Grant that no wagons can go over that pack trail. But as I understand, this missionary doctor came riding in hot haste, from down the Snake, found the emigrants discouraged by Grant and other post people, called them together, made a speech, told

'em he'd been over the trail and he *knew* and that they were foolish to abandon their wagons and implements and try to take their goods and families in by saddle, that they'd need their States animals to plough with, and that he guarantee to *get 'em through!*"

"Will he?"

"Well," answered Thomas Fitzpatrick, slowly, rubbing his chin; "they left, wagons and all, August thirtieth, and now it's September eighteenth and none of 'em has come back; and there aren't any wagons lying 'longside the trail, far as we've seen."

Now the two parties united camped beside the walls of Fort Hall. Agent Grant himself stepped out to give welcome and meet the lieutenant.

"You Americans are a wonderful people," declared Agent Grant. "Why, this emigration that just went through is four or five times as large as that of last year, and it's taking wagons in! Heavy farm wagons, heaped with goods!"

"Will they succeed?"

"No, sir. I and every other man of experience know that the trail is impossible for wagons. At least ——" and Agent Grant hesitated, "impossible except perchance for this Doctor Whitman. I never heard or talked with such an obstinate, determined man. He has a tremendous responsibility on his hands, though. I'll wager that before you get two hundred miles from the post you'll find the trail fairly littered with cast-off wagons. But if not, lieutenant—if *not,* then it will

be a blow to British rule in Oregon. I have heard Dr. McLoughlin, our chief agent, at Vancouver, say that Oregon is safe, because it never can be reached by Yankee families except around Cape Horn; but what he'll say when he sees the Yankees coming down from the mountains, with wagons, all the way from the States, I don't know. And such a number! Last year Dr. White took in a few, afoot or by saddle and pack —but this year, eight hundred, with wagons—my stars! If they get through, then I shall expect to hear of them continuing right on down to the ocean and under it to Japan!"

The lieutenant laughed.

"You British in Oregon don't know the American," he said. "When the Yankee once starts for a new country, nothing can stop him."

"But some of them didn't know they were in Oregon yet!" expostulated Captain Grant. "They asked me: 'Say, stranger, how far to Oregon?'"

"They asked us the same, back on the Bear."

"And still they were pressing on!" gasped Captain Grant. "Well, well!"

"How are you fixed for supplies?"

"Cleaned out, lieutenant. But I have some Yankee oxen."

"Good."

Agent Grant was a kindly man, helping Americans and British alike. The emigrants had been supplied by him with whatever he had that they wished.

The lieutenant was enabled to buy of him several horses, and five fat oxen.

Now indeed winter set in with an all-day snow. Suddenly the country looked bleak and drear. By travel up and down to the end of the trail at Vancouver was some 900 miles. Lieutenant Frémont called his company together and made a short address.

" I am under instructions to go on to Vancouver," he said. " It is not a pleasant nor an easy trail, at the best, and as winter is at hand there are some of you whom I will discharge. It is impossible for me to continue with so large a company, and several men are in no condition to take the trip, anyway. Those whom I discharge I discharge with honor; they will be entitled to transportation and to pay until they reach the frontier again."

So he named Charles DeForrest, Henry Lee, John Campbell, William Creuss, Auguste Vasquez, Alexis Pera, Patrick White, Baptiste Tesson, Michel Crelis, and François and Basil Lajeunesse. Everybody hated to have Basil go, but his family needed him.

Mr. Preuss the German, and Sergeant Zindel the Prussian artillerist, and Jacob the colored boy, and the gallant Alexander Godey of the black silky locks, were retained; and of course Kit Carson and Thomas Fitzpatrick the White Head; and, hurrah, Oliver!

In the midst of cold rain and gusty wind camp was broken, and the march was resumed: that of the one party for the South Pass, 300 miles, and Fort Laramie,

and home; that of the other party for the Columbia River, 600 miles, and Vancouver, and—who knew?

Therefore down along the great and desolate Snake River travelled the party of Lieutenant Frémont. Ever the wagon-wheel tracks of the 800 emigrants led on, and on.

The Frémont company found the road growing rougher, with many steep grades up which the men must boost the carts, one by one. Nevertheless, the heavier emigrant wagons had passed; none had yet been abandoned.

Thomas Fitzpatrick the Bad Hand again was delegated to keep the rear, and bring along the baggage-train; the lieutenant and his lighter column pushed to the front.

After a week of travel Snake Indians, fishing for salmon, were passed. Fat and ruddy-faced and jolly with the oily meat were these Snakes, and to the company traded salmon fresh and dried. "Haggai, haggai (fish, fish)!" cried the Indians, glad to see more white wayfarers; for to the Indians the "Bostons," as they called the American settlers, had brought much prosperity in shape of old trousers and battered hats and such gear, exchanged for fish.

At the first Ford of the Snake, where the Oregon Trail crossed from the left or the south bank to the right or the north bank, the Frémont men almost lost their howitzer and mules in the strong current. But the emigrants, said the Indians, had chained their

wagons in a solid line, and had crossed, and had gone on. The distance from Fort Hall was 250 miles, and Agent Grant's prediction of wreck and litter upon the trail had not come true. The wheel marks continued.

At the end of the second week of travel the Frémont party reached Fort Boisé, Hudson Bay Company trading post, companion to Fort Hall, now 350 miles eastward.

Agent Payette reported that sun-browned and gaunt and tattered, with wagons creaking and cattle limping, the Yankee emigrants' train had passed through.

"An amazing sight," affirmed Agent Payette. "Men, women and children, in they poured and out they went, piloted by your Doctor Whitman. They are eleven days ahead of you. They have come thus far—but worse awaits them, when they leave the Snake and strike into the hills for the Blue Mountains. That is a trail scarcely fit for pack-mules, so thick grows the sage."

At Boisé the road again crossed the Snake, from right to left bank, and the faithful rubber boat came into good play. It, and a portion of a bullock carcass, were left at the post for the use of the Thomas Fitzpatrick party, toiling in second division.

On the third day out of Fort Boisé, sure enough the trail veered from the rushing Snake, and inland pointing would cross the northeastern corner of present Oregon State.

Rougher waxed the way. There were signs that the emigrants had been in much trouble. At one place a wagon had been overturned twice, in a short distance.

Straight down a steep rocky slant, as sharply pitched as a peaked roof, had plunged the emigrants, their wagon wheels scoring deeply the scant soil. And down by the same route went the Frémont party, holding hard on the howitzer and the spring-carriage.

Agent Payette had told the lieutenant of an Indian trail out which would prove better than that road which the emigrants probably would take. Following this to the Blue Mountains, the Frémont party climbed the heavily wooded divide, where logs must be chopped and trees must be felled to clear a way for the howitzer and the carriage. At last, from an open spot across the summit, westward could be descried the Walla Walla River, tributary to the Columbia, and light green patches which must be the settlements of American missions.

On the morning of October 24 these green patches were reached. They were the missionary station of Doctor Whitman himself. Fields had been cultivated to potatoes and corn; and here, at Waiilatpu, among the Waiilatpu Indians of the Cayuse nation, on the Walla Walla River near to present Walla Walla City in southeastern Washington State, was the Doctor Whitman house, made with adobe clay bricks.

Oliver had looked forward to seeing again this

plucky Doctor Whitman, physician, missionary and Oregon enthusiast—that wayworn traveller with the mixed white and brown hair, the large mouth and the deep-set blue eyes, who had arrived, so nearly exhausted, in Taos last winter on his long trip from coast to coast. Doctor Whitman was absent down the river to bring back Mrs. Whitman. But here were many of the emigrants, resting and staring and eating potatoes.

On the way from Waiilatpu down along the Walla Walla to the mouth at the Columbia more emigrants were passed. They all were loud in their praises of Doctor Whitman.

Near the mouth of the Walla Walla was Fort Walla Walla, a third of the chain of Hudson Bay Company posts along the trail. A few hundred yards below flowed past the lordly flood of the noble Columbia River.

The next supply station in prospect was The Dalles, 150 miles below, where the Methodist missions had headquarters.

Indians, Cayuse and Nez Percé (Pierced Nose), were met; some of them seemed almost civilized, in their white-man clothes, and could speak a little English. This was the influence of the Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries. And again, some of the Indians met seemed not civilized at all, being very dirty, and inclined to steal horses. However, they were not now dealing with weary and ignorant emigrants; they were dealing with mountain-men—with

Kit Carson and Oliver, Lieutenant Frémont and the German Preuss; so they reaped no horses.

The snowy dome of mighty Mt. Hood uplifted, a beacon before, marking the high Cascade Range where winter was in full reign. The air, at night, was cold, below freezing—but all were accustomed to this; and worse was to come.

On November 4, forty-three days and 700 miles from Fort Hall, 102 days and 1925 miles from Fort St. Vrain, into the mission settlement of The Dalles of the Lower Columbia rode, with their best bearing and at their best pace, the tanned, weather-stained, patched and gaunt but never beaten Frémont and Carson men.

XVI

SOUTHWARD FOR THE UNKNOWN

THE Reverend H. K. Perkins was missionary in charge of the station here at The Dalles. He and Mrs. Perkins and all their household gave the Frémont party a hearty American welcome. It seemed good to be among wooden houses, and ploughed fields, and gardens; and the lieutenant and the French said that it reminded them of Missouri.

Fort Vancouver was ninety miles on, down the Columbia and beyond the Cascade Range. Lieutenant Frémont decided to leave the party and the animals to rest at the mission, while he went ahead, by canoe, to finish his survey by reporting at Vancouver. This would connect the survey with the survey made along the coast by Lieutenant Wilkes; and besides, at Fort Vancouver resided Dr. John McLoughlin, chief of the Hudson Bay Company in Oregon. To call upon him was a necessary courtesy from the American Government to the British Government. Furthermore, at Vancouver probably could be purchased supplies of a kind that could not be found at the missionary stations.

The fifth of November being Sunday, of course this was a day of rest for everybody at The Dalles; but on

Monday the Reverend Mr. Perkins helped the lieutenant to hire a large canoe from the Indians here, and three Indians, who owned it, were engaged as crew. With them, and taking Mr. Preuss, Jacob Dodson the colored youth, and Baptiste Bernier, the lieutenant launched off for Vancouver.

He appointed Kit Carson in charge of the camp, and up the back trail he sent a note for Thomas Fitzpatrick, instructing him to drop the carts at Dr. Whitman's, and to come on to The Dalles with pack-saddles. Kit Carson also was instructed to be making pack-saddles.

All this was very interesting.

"Do you think we'll go back by the same trail we came out, Kit?" queried Oliver.

"Wall, I dunno," mused Kit Carson. "But I reckon not. That's not Frémont way. We found the trail out hyar already made, an' nothing left for us to do but to follow along an' calkilate figgers. So the government at Washington'll know all about the Oregon Trail an' about the lake, too; an' it won't be like Frémont to take the back track. He prefers the new to the old. Once or twice he's spoken of going back by the north, around the head o' the Missouri, an' down. But these hyar pack-saddles mean a new trail somewheres."

The Reverend Mr. Perkins had suggested to the lieutenant that he could reach Washington quickest and easiest by chartering a small brig, which was

anchored in the river below Fort Vancouver, and sailing down the coast to the Isthmus of Panama, there to cross and charter another vessel for the United States. Consequently, with this in prospect, and with the return by way of the sources of the Missouri in prospect, the future looked bright. Besides——

"Or else," remarked Kit, "thar's the southern trail, to find that Buenaventura River emptying from the desert into the ocean, and to strike the Spanish Trail for the mountains an' the States. The lieutenant has been mightily interested in the Buenaventura. He's talked considerable about it."

Here was the third route.

The lieutenant returned on the afternoon of the eighteenth. At once was it known that he had decided for the southern trail, into the unexplored, where awaited the fabled Buenaventura.

According to the lieutenant, and to Kit Carson, and all, this was a country well-nigh unexplored, this country south, lying between the Wasatch Range of the Great Salty Lake on the east and the Sierra Nevada Range bordering California on the west. All accounts agreed that it was a great basin, of sandy, salty, sagy bare-rock desert broken by sudden peaks and ridges. In it Lieutenant Frémont anticipated finding strange peoples and wild valleys and curious waters.

First to be encountered, upon the march down from the Columbia of the north, was a lake called Tlamath or Klamet or Klamath Lake, which in the

spring was a real lake, but which in the summer and the fall was only a green meadow. This lake was at the head of the Rivière des Chutes or Falls River, which from it flowed north for the Columbia. From the neighborhood of the lake the Sacramento River of California flowed south, and the Tlamath River flowed west to the ocean. Moreover, the Tlamath Indians, living at the lake, were said to be treacherous and hard fighting.

Next to be encountered, as the lieutenant hoped, was a flat desert lake called Mary's Lake, down in the Great Basin.

Next should come the fabled Buenaventura, or Good Fortune River, flowing across from the vicinity of the Great Salt Lake clear to the Pacific, and emptying into the Bay of San Francisco!

With the Buenaventura located, as a water-way from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific, then the Frémont party might head eastward more, for the Rockies themselves, and the Arkansas River, and Bent's Fort below.

Now everybody was enthusiastic. No one objected to starting out at once, in the beginning of winter, after hard travel already of 2000 miles, for the unknown. The talk was of hidden lakes and rivers and boiling springs, and of marvels of man, beast and plant such as the Great Salty Lake had failed to produce.

"Hooray for the new country!" was the cry.

The lieutenant had brought back from Fort Van-

couver provisions of flour, dried peas and tallow, for three months. The tallow was to be used in frying, etc. Enough horses had been engaged from the Indians about the mission to recruit the number of animals, saddle and pack, to 104. The Reverend Mr. Perkins prevailed upon two of his Indians to be guides as far as the Tlamath Lake. One of these Indians had fought the Tlamaths there, and had been wounded, so he was not likely to forget the route. The pack-saddles were finished rapidly, and other preparations responded, as fast, to the enthusiasm.

On the twenty-first Thomas Fitzpatrick and his party, including Mr. Talbot the tenderfoot (soon to be a veteran), Alexander Godey of the handsome hair, Sergeant Zindel the Prussian artillerist, arrived. When they had heard, they also were eager for the trip. Mr. Gilpin must proceed on, to Vancouver; Mr. Dwight already had gone.

Upon the twenty-fourth all arrangements were completed. At the last the Reverend Mr. Perkins brought to the camp a Chinook Indian boy, aged nineteen, who wished "to see the whites" and learn how the whites lived in their homes of the east. He had been in the Perkins household and could speak a little English. Him the lieutenant enrolled, promising to return him to his relatives and friends, after the journey.

This night of November 24 the camp was so excited over the new trail and the homeward way, that nobody

slept well, and all rose before daylight, to breakfast and pack by the cold star-shine.

Twenty-two or three whites there were—American, French, German, Canadian—to take the trail for the Buenaventura: twenty-two or three whites, Jacob the young negro, the Chinook stripling, 104 horses and mules, a number of cattle, the howitzer, and Oliver's dog from the River of Weeds. The trusty spring wagon was left behind, as a gift to the mission. Its glass lamps had been broken, and one of its front panels had been kicked in by a horse; otherwise it was of good condition. The mission was pleased to have it.

In a long line, about noon of this November 25 (Thanksgiving season!) of 1843, amidst flurries of snow, the expedition set forth from the Dalles of the Columbia. The Reverend Mr. Perkins rode out with them for a few miles, to wish them God-speed. Finally he must stop.

"Good-by, good-by, and God bless you," he said, beginning with the lieutenant, and shaking hands all down the line. "Good-by and good fortune."

"Good-by," they responded; and "Au revoir, monsieur."

The course was south, up the long valley of the Rivière des Chutes, with the white Cascade Mountains on the right, and many an icy stream to ford.

At the headwaters of the River of the Falls a pine forest was entered, December 8; a pine forest cloaking magnificently a yellowish-white soil of pulverized

pumice-stone whereon grew not a blade of grass. The Indian guides pointed out, as great curiosities, pine cones a foot and a half long.

Now the trail was good, the weather pleasant, if crisp, but the horses and mules and cattle fared badly for lack of grass. Then, on December 10, from the pines the cavalcade emerged upon a wide green meadow—a lake of grass; and—

"Tlamath Lake! Tlamath Lake! Lac du Tlamath!" welled the glad cheer.

This must be it. Thus the two Indian guides declared it, and by its meadow character it answered to descriptions. The horses and mules and cattle eyed wistfully the green expanse extending to their feet; and they fell greedily to cropping.

Surrounded by timbered slopes was the lake-meadow. It looked peaceful. But according to trapper theories, "Whar thar ain't any Injuns to be seen, then thar air the most of 'em!" and here in the Tlamath country no chances should be taken needlessly. Moreover, out in the middle of the lake-meadow smokes were rising, and beyond, along the shore, were other smokes.

"Better speak to 'em with the big gun, to tell 'em who we air, hadn't we, captain?" suggested Kit Carson.

"That's a good idea," seconded Fitzpatrick the Bad Hand.

"Yes; throw a shell across the lake, sergeant; but

don't hurt anybody," said the lieutenant to Sergeant Zindel.

Nothing loath was Sergeant Zindel. He and his cannoneers sprang to the brass howitzer, unlimbered it and swung it about, pointing it diagonally over the lake-meadow. Under the short guttural orders of the sergeant a charge was rammed home, and was followed by a shell. The three Indians—the two guides and the young Chinoòk—gazed with much wonderment, and even the Frémont men were expectant.

The cannoneers sprang aside; Sergeant Zíndel applied the fuse to the primed vent. The loud "Boom!" of the howitzer rolled to the mountain-slopes around about, but before any echoes had answered, there a quarter of a mile away, over the lake-meadow against the timber back-ground burst with white explosion the shell!

"Bravo! Hooray!" cheered the company, now listening to the echoes.

"Wah! The gun that speaks twice!" murmured the three Indians, awed by the shot.

"Those fellows know something's happened, all right," remarked Mr. Talbot.

For instantly every smoke had been quenched, as the frightened Tlamaths would conceal their villages and themselves from the astounding "medicine people" who had appeared.

Camp was pitched upon a piny point, before which the animals could graze under guard.

The Indian guides were of the opinion that the dreaded Tlamaths were " very little " before the white men and the gun-that-speaks-twice. Lieutenant Frémont determined to keep up the first impression made; therefore, as this afternoon and the next morning no Tlamaths had come near, he resolved to visit *them.* Arrayed for peace or war, out into the lake-meadow boldly rode the company.

The smoke place was distant and obscure, until when within half a mile of it a collection of low round huts could be distinguished, with Indians perched atop, watching.

" These hyar guides want us to form line, trapper fashion, an' ride down in style," explained Kit Carson.

To humor the guides, who were proud of their company, the Frémont men ranged themselves in a long front, and proceeded at a pace, while the guides galloped ahead to meet two Indians now approaching from the village.

They were the village chief and his wife; and they had come out, on behalf of their alarmed people, to live or die at the mercy of the mysterious strangers.

The Tlamath chief, handsome of face and soft of voice, thankful that his life was spared, conducted the powerful strangers to his village. This was composed of a few large woven-grass huts, entered by doors in the rounded tops. Grass were the huts; grass the shoes and the caps of the inmates, and grass were the mats and baskets of the furnishings. Fish was

the food. Therefore well did the Klamath—whom Lieutenant Frémont styles Tlamath—call themselves "People of the Lake," for by rushes and fish the lake supplied them with their necessities of life.

Sharp-nosed, prick-eared, woolly, wolfish dogs were sitting, with their masters and mistresses, upon the roofs of the huts; and as companion to Oliver's dog the men purchased a puppy, whom they named "Tlamath."

Now the two guides from the mission at the Dalles concluded that they had come as far as was required of them; they would turn homeward. Lieutenant Frémont asked the Tlamath chief for Tlamath guides onward; but the handsome, soft-spoken Tlamath chief shook his head, and by signs indicated that he had no horses, the snow on the mountains was deep, and his family were sick. He could not go, and it seemed that he had none of his young men to send, either.

Therefore, the next morning, the Frémont and Carson company started out, to make their own trail. Snow was falling, the sky was dark, and for a mile and a half they crossed the narrow end of the lake-meadow, where amidst the frozen grass were ponds of ice upon which the pack animals slipped and floundered.

The travel was east, pointed for another "large water" which the Indians said would be found in that direction, after a few days' journey. Thus, from the lake-meadow, which was not really Klamath Lake of Southern Oregon, but was only Klamath Marsh, north

of the lake proper, the company again entered the great pine forest. Here some of the trees were five and six feet through, at the base.

That night the thermometer dropped to zero. Among fallen timber and in snow sometimes a foot deep the morning march was made, the overworked mules tugging at the heavy howitzer. Then was heard the sound of galloping hoofs, behind. Everybody turned, to welcome or to fight, whichever might be demanded. It was the good-hearted Tlamath chief and a few other men, coming on, along the trail, through the myriad stately, snow-weighted pines, to guide the strangers.

Always amidst pines, and snow, over a broad mountain eastward led the Indians, until on the next day they explained that the snow was growing too deep for them, and the cold too severe, and that they must turn back. Lieutenant Frémont gave them presents of scarlet cloth, moccasins, etc.; and spreading the Flag before them he explained its use.

"This is the symbol of the great nation to which we belong," he said, by signs. "Whenever it comes to you, you must treat it well, for it is friendly to you. You and it are friends."

Whereupon the Tlamaths nodded wisely. As if in remembrance, they ever have been at peace with the white race; although their cousins, the Modocs, badly treated by the white immigrants, finally fought a great fight, among their lava beds, in 1873.

The Tlamaths, or Klamaths, left for their snug

grass huts in the lake-meadow. Travelling now by compass into the unknown, down from the bleak mountain and across a level valley and up another bleak mountain, eastward toiled the company. Ever the course lay through constant, silent pines, where the snow sifted thickly, with no breeze bearing it, or where, three feet deep and crusted, it cut the legs of the animals.

Thus, in long single file of men and of animals, exhausted and apparently lost, the cattle laboring heavily, the Frémont expedition to the Buenaventura traversed the gloomy stretch of high, unceasing, snow-enshrouded but gloomy forest, where apparently man had never been before. Suddenly the lieutenant, leading, spoke to Kit Carson, just behind.

"Aren't the trees thinning, in front, there, Kit?" Hope was in his voice.

"Yes, sir. I believe they air, captain."

"Come on, boys," called the lieutenant, cheerily. "We're getting out." And he spurred forward his horse. Spurred forward all.

Sure enough, ahead the atmosphere was distinctly lighter. The lieutenant was first to reach the spot; he reined in his horse, Proveau the buffalo-runner, and craned as if gazing down. He uttered a loud shout, and waved his hat; shouted and waved Kit Carson, the next to arrive. Mr. Preuss the German joined in the excitement; joined Godey and Jacob and even the Chinook, and when it came Oliver's turn he also joined.

For they all were ranged upon a rim of a great wall—a great wall of sheer rock, piled with snow and bitten by icy wind, while below, a thousand feet, was an enchanted summer-land!

Here was a lovely blue lake, in the midst of a lush green prairie enveloped by warm sunshine; while up above, on the top of the precipice, reigned snow and ice and stormy sky. Scarce could they believe their eyes.

"Don't see any trees, to speak of, down there," mused Lieutenant Frémont, as shivering they gazed, admiring the scene. "That looks to me like the Great Basin, at last. We must be on the edge of it. It extends on east to the Salt Lake."

"Ain't we gwine down to summah, lieutenant?" queried Jacob the colored youth, anxiously, his teeth chattering. "I'se stone stiff."

"So am I, Jacob," answered the lieutenant, laughing. "Of course we're going down. Who's for Summer Lake?"

"I'm for getting off this hyar Winter Ridge," said Kit Carson.

"That's it—Summer Lake and Winter Ridge!" cried the lieutenant. "Three cheers, boys! Good-by to Winter Ridge, and on to Summer Lake!"

They cheered; and turning the poor horses and mules and cattle who had dully been nosing the snow or pricking their ears at the glimpse of green below, they sought for a trail down.

XVII

SCANT CHRISTMAS COMFORT

Not until after four or five miles of close search was any descent at all discovered. Down they scrambled, amidst rock and snow; a pack mule, slipping, rolled head over heels for 300 feet until stopped by a ravine; the howitzer must be left midway of the steep trail, for further effort; and night overtook them before they reached the bottom.

A real lake, with real grass, it was. By the lake were several dry cedars, which fed fires to guide in the rearmost of the struggling company. Finally all were safe, camp was pitched, supper was cooked, the animals grazed contentedly. Above, were gloomy pines and snow and chilling wind of winter; here below, were limpid water and tender grass and mild breeze, if not of summer then at least of spring.

Travelling along the west shore of this Summer Lake in south central Oregon (Klamath Marsh just to the west of it, and the ridge between), the company rounded the southern end, and amidst much recent Indian sign and a bleak country of marsh and sand and weeds and black volcanic rock crossed eastward to another large lake. This is Lake Abert, named by

Lieutenant Frémont in honor of his colonel, J. J. Abert, Chief of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, United States Army.

Dignified and worthy of the name appeared this lake, twenty miles in length, and spread between black ridges; but as they drew near, a shiver passed through the column, for the shores were drifted high.

"Look at the snow, captain!" cried Kit.

When they drew nearer still they found that they were barred from the water itself by mud. A sickening odor filled the air, and the drifts of snow turned out to be a disgusting, powdery white substance banked high by evaporating water.

Thus deceptive proved this land into which they had been lured: a land of fair lakes which changed to fetid pools; of streams which led on until they ended only at the unwholesome lakes; of green grass sour and salt-encrusted; and of bare black ridges which gave place only to more bare and black ridges.

The Frémont and Carson company pushed on, the line straggling as the weakening animals fell behind. Somewhere in this vicinity should be Mary's Lake; and beyond should be the Buenaventura, with rich grassy bottom-lands and much fat game to cheer the heart of all.

Save for ducks, on the mud-engirted lakes, and rabbits in the sage-brush, game here was none. Indian signs, as trails and as deserted huts of brush, were many. The expedition must advance cautiously.

From Lake Abert they moved southward, past another lake from which they were barred by mud, and Christmas Eve they camped at the south end of yet another lake.

" 'Tain't much like Christmas Eve down in Washington or in old Missouri; is it, Mistuh Frémont?" commented Jacob the colored youth.

" Oh, well, we'll enjoy our Christmas all the more, next time, Jacob," answered the lieutenant.

" Water an' grass air better than usual, anyhow," vouchsafed Kit Carson. " Might have a wuss camp."

" 'Xpect that's our Christmas gift," mused Jacob.

Around the camp fires they all proceeded to review the Christmas celebrations such as they knew; and there was quite a variety: Kit and Oliver could tell of the celebrations by the Mexicans in New Mexico, the lieutenant and Jacob could tell of those in the South, Mr. Preuss of those in Germany, the St. Louis French of those in St. Louis and vicinity, the Canadian French of those in Canada, Thomas Fitzpatrick recalled Christmas in trappers' camp, Mr. Talbot that at his American home, etc.

Oliver slept late, to be awakened by a great outburst of rifle and carbine reports mingled with the " Bang!" of the howitzer. " Noël! Noël!" cheered the French. " Merry Christmas!" joined in the lieutenant. All wished each other the compliments of the season, and " Christmas Lake" was the camp place called. An extra ration of sugar was doled out, as

Christmas feast. For this was Christmas Day, 1843, in the desert basin of south central Oregon.

Southward led the trail, and still southward, for on the west the snowy mountain range hedged close the course, and on the east the country was ever desolate and repulsing. No Indians were seen until, December 28, smokes were suddenly descried rising above the snowy sage-brush. On at a gallop urged the party, and came so quickly to two huts, rudely built, open at the top, that the sage fires were burning in them and baskets and rabbit skins and grass were scattered about. Now several almost naked Indians were visible, upon the near-by ridge, and others were hastily climbing to them.

"Tabibo-bo! Tabibo-bo!" they shouted—or, in the Snake language: "White! White!" And they tried to conceal themselves among the rocks.

For them galloped Kit Carson, fearless, holding up his hand as token of parley. Just as fearless, Alexander Godey dashing out caught him, and they continued together. They made a fine sight, these two gracefully riding mountain-men—Godey with his floating locks as spectacular as any Custer of the yellow locks, Kit Carson, not so handsome but more steady, and both brave.

The Indian men ran as fleet as deer. Turning back, Kit Carson rode right upon a woman, with two little children, hiding behind a sage clump. She screamed shrilly with terror and shut tight her eyes.

He spoke to her in Snake tongue, and brought her to the lieutenant, at the huts, where by presents and kind words she was calmed down.

The men would not come in, but from the women was it learned that they were Shoshokies, or Poor-Snakes-Who-Walk: Root-Diggers of the Desert, living upon roots and rabbits and dressing in scant rabbit-skins—a wretched people, yet wishing to be let alone.

The first week of January, 1844, had been used entirely, and still there were no signs of Mary's Lake, nor of the Buenaventura River. Since leaving the Dalles of the Columbia fifteen horses and mules had fallen by the trail or had been stolen; the feet of the others were cut and bruised; water and grass constantly disappointed; the trail was blind; on the one hand were the mountains of the Sierra Nevada, on the other hand was the interminable, desolate desert; pressing southward, seeking the line of least resistance, marched the Frémont and Carson men.

The company advanced cautiously, feeling a route. By fresh signs Indians must be hovering about, watching, but none was seen. Then, on the late afternoon of January tenth, the lieutenant and Kit came hurrying into camp, with the news that they had been viewing a great lake—a real deep-water lake, perhaps Mary's Lake!

Like the waves of this reputed sparkling lake, swept through the camp a wave of joy and of hope. The lake lay just beyond a little saddle or pass which

closed the end of the draw wherein had been pitched the camp. The lieutenant and Kit had climbed a crest of the high lake-shore, the better to survey; and there they had sat for some time, feasting their eyes upon the dark-green water, white-capped and rolling.

"But Mary's Lake is low and rushy, isn't it?" queried Mr. Talbot. "At least, so I understand, from conversation."

"So I understand, too," admitted the lieutenant.

"Wall," drawled Kit; "we'll see; but that big lake yonder doesn't look to me like the Mary's is said to look. And when we come to the Buenaventura we'll know it by beaver cuttings in it. These basin streams have no beaver, 'cept towards their heads in the mountains. But the Pacific slope air full o' beaver."

"That's right," affirmed Thomas Fitzpatrick. "When we strike a stream over here with beaver sign in it, it connects with the sea."

In the morning the company moved forward at best pace—which was delayed by the hobbling pack animals and the one ox who remained. Now somebody—it was Baptiste Tabeau—struck up a paddle song; and Godey and the lieutenant and Kit and Fitzpatrick and all joined in:

"Gai, gai, avançons nous!"

they sang.

"Gay, gay, advance we gay!"

And Oliver's dog and Tlamath, the other Indian dog, barked wolfishly.

Up the slope of the pass they strove. On the top the snow was a foot deep, but below, 2000 feet, filling a wide space between grim snowy peaks lay indeed the lake—a mighty mass of dark-green, tossing and tumbling. And one after another, as they saw, they cheered.

Camp was made at the foot of the pass, beside a little stream; as soon as duties were performed, everybody hastened for the lake. Its shore was rocky, cliff-skirted, mountain-guarded; and its strips of beach were cut short by towering walls. The water was slightly tinged with salt; and some of the granite boulders of the shore were coated with a limy substance.

Indians had camped here before the white explorers; and following an Indian trail, the next morning the company moved on, to the lake. A furious snow-squall hid the waters, and drove the surf four and five feet high upon the beaches. The trail, leading between surf and rock-walls, in places was so narrow that the howitzer barely could pass.

Pyramid Lake did Lieutenant Frémont name this great water, because of a curious rock, sharp-tipped, broad-based, like a pyramid, rising five or six hundred feet, out in the midst of the water. And Pyramid Lake is the place, to-day, on the western border of the State of Nevada. The christening occurred January 14, 1844; and upon the rock-bound shore was sacrificed the last of the cattle, driven clear from the mission station at the Dalles of the Columbia.

SCANT CHRISTMAS COMFORT

Pyramid Lake certainly did not resemble any description of any Mary's Lake. An Indian clad in hare-skins as in a cloak was persuaded to the camp; three or four more Indians were met on the trail along the lake shore; and a chief invited the white men to his village, in a cottonwood grove at the mouth of a river emptying into the lake. As the company approached the village, the chief called in a loud voice, and many Indians, with bows and arrows, appeared from hiding in the brush.

Here, at last, was a camp of plenty, for after the Frémont and Carson company had taken a strong position in a grassy bottom of a bend of the river, Alexander Godey uttered a loud shout, and pointed. An Indian was coming, bearing a fish! And what a fish—pink, and broad, and more than three feet long!

Eagerly the white men (and Jacob) gathered around the Indian. He had no difficulty in trading his fish for a strip of scarlet cloth, and away he trotted to bring another. Other Indians came hurrying, with fish to trade; so that speedily the business was brisk. Never were fish taken to a better market.

Mr. Preuss and the lieutenant pronounced them a salmon trout, probably of flesh very savory and wholesome. Soon every man (not omitting Oliver) had his fish, and was cooking it. Some tried roasting, some broiling, some frying; the air was full of the rich fumes. Having exhausted their supply, the Indians were running to the river, to spear more.

Several of the Indians wore ornaments of brass buttons, as if from the whites. However, as the village spoke a dialect of the Snake tongue hard to understand, although Kit Carson and Godey and Thomas Fitzpatrick did their best with the sign language, little information was extracted. The next morning the march was resumed, up this Salmon Trout River.

XVIII

FORCING THE SNOWY SIERRAS

No beaver cuttings were found upon any of the streams. High and cold on the right continued the long tier of the Sierra Nevada mountains—sometimes white and shining, sometimes dimmed by fresh storm; blotched by snow, welted with bare ridges, brushy and bleak on the left stretched for leagues unknown the desert of the Great Basin: pent betwixt the two, southward through the mid-winter pushed the wearied Frémont and Carson men. Around about, on every hand, welled into the frosty air the signal smokes of unseen peoples.

Now on the third day, which was January 18, after leaving Pyramid Lake, the lieutenant called a council, of Kit Carson, and Fitzpatrick the Bad Hand, and the German Preuss, and Mr. Talbot the Washington young man, Alexander Godey, Baptiste Bernier, and one or two others.

"I teenk," said Baptiste Tabeau, "Meester the Lieutenant, he would try to cross the mountains to other side, where all is warm. Kit Carson say it very warm, with much grass an' horse an' deer over that side. Ma foi——" and Baptiste, who always was one

of the jolliest of the company, shrugged his shoulders, shiveringly. "I hope we go."

"That snow look mighty deep, on those big mountains," uttered Jacob the colored youth. "But I guess we gwine to freeze to deff as easy as we gwine to starve to deff. Marse Lieutenant an' Mistuh Kit'll get us through, though."

The council broke up; Thomas Fitzpatrick, hastening to look after the animals, which were in his charge, made the announcement.

"We cross to the Valley of the Sacramento, boys," he informed, passing through.

At the news a cheer rang out. Kit Carson added to the enthusiasm, that night, around the camp fires of cottonwood and sage.

"I war in the Valley o' the Sacramento, summer o' Twenty-nine, with Ewing Young," he related. "We'd crossed the desert from Touse. That war my fust trapping trip, an' it war fifteen year an' more ago; since then I've travelled pretty much over all the West, hunting the beaver, but I tell you, boys, that thar country o' the Californy coast beats all. We entered from the south, an' followed down the San Joachin, to the Sacramento, an' trapped that a ways; an' the beaver an' the otter an' the wild hosses an' the elk an' the deer an' the trees an' the forage war something wonderful. It snows on the mountains, we heard tell, but down in the valleys it air green an' spring-like all

winter; a fat country. Thar's whar we're heading, to-morrow."

"Hooray!" they cheered, again. "No more bad water and salt grass and starvation trail for us. Hooray!"

So the expedition turned west, for the towering white peaks not far.

While they were seeking for a pass (their eyes still eager to mark the least trace of the Buenaventura), a strange figure came running down a draw. While his legs worked steadily, he held up an arm as signal. He was an old Indian, partially naked. He did not slacken until, out of breath, he had seized with one hand the first hand that he could reach, while with the other he extended a little skin bag, as an offering.

When he was done panting, and had been assured that he would not be killed, he accepted presents for the bag of pine seeds; and after a talk in sign language he was hired by scarlet cloth and beads and brass to act as guide for two days. He stated that he knew of a good pass, westward.

The pass was not a pass over the range; it was only a pass over the first foot-hills. More Indians were induced by friendly signals to come close. They immediately held out their little skin sacks of pine seeds.

In council with them the lieutenant asked for guides, again, over the mountains to the country of the whites. But the Indians, squatting like rabbits and murmuring together, refused. Their spokesman,

standing, pointed to the snow, and raised his palm to his chin, and then raised it above his head, to show how deep was the snow. He signed that the company should travel southward more, where there was another pass over a lower range; and here, in one day's journey, lived a people who would guide through the pass of the great mountains themselves.

For bright cloth and goods the Indians agreed to supply a guide as far as the people of the first pass. Supplied with pine seeds oily and well-flavored and as large as small nuts, the company pressed southward once more, among the snowy foot-hills of the eastern base of the giant Sierras.

Mr. Preuss and party came toiling up the trail, from a secondary camp where they had remained in charge of the baggage, and reported that the howitzer was stuck fast. Even Samuel Neal, the blacksmith of the expedition, admitted that the battered cannon was beyond rescue. Many times had he repaired its carriage, during the months; it had been his pet; but now he could do nothing for it. Sergeant Zindel concurred.

"Ach, a goot gun," he grunted. "I would not leave it in battle; but such snow and hills——!"

Therefore, after its 3000 miles of service, from St. Louis of the State of Missouri to the Salt Lake, and to the Columbia, and down into the desert, here upon the upper West Walker River of the Nevada-California border was left the brass howitzer.

Snow fell heavily, the cold increased; and all the

shivering Indians, except the young man guide, dropped away, to return to their village. Frowning indeed appeared the stormy mountains, where awaited the first pass, and the guide himself seemed ready to desert.

"Kit, you and Godey put him between you," directed the lieutenant. "Show him your rifles, so he'll understand."

And trudging afoot, like the majority of the company, to save the horses, Kit Carson and Alexander Godey took each a side of the nervous Indian and patted their rifle-stocks significantly. He rolled his eyes in mute despair. The snowflakes had coated his dark skin, for he sillily carried his blue and red cloth tightly rolled, in a wad, rather than don it and perhaps soil it. Presently the lieutenant called:

"All right, Kit. Let him go. The trail looks plain."

"Wall," answered Kit; "mout as well. He says thar's a hut near whar he'll stay till after the storm." And with a single motion of his arm he bade the guide be free—whereupon away scudded the glad youth, as hard as he could run, for shelter.

As had been promised by the Indians behind, into the camp here at the inner foot of the pass came other Indians. They thronged, mysteriously as wild animals, to the fires; they were without fear, and were very inquisitive. The lieutenant held again a council, to ask for a guide.

Kit Carson made the sign-talk for the company; for the Indians an old man responded. The fires blazed brightly, illuminating the snow, and the trees, and the Indians, squatting in a row upon logs or ground, and the company lying about, rifles handy. It was a wild scene.

"Tell them," instructed the lieutenant, to Kit, "that we have come from very far, almost a twelve-months' journey to the east, and that we wish only to get across these mountains, into the country there of the other whites."

Thus Kit did. The old man answered more rapidly even than speech—for a gesture conveyed a whole sentence.

"He says," translated Kit, "that we can't get over, now. Before snow fell it war six sleeps across to t'other side, whar whites live; now the snow air over our heads. He says we must follow this hyar river down, an' whar it empties into a lake thar air fish, an' people, an' no snow, an' we can stay thar till spring. Reckon he means that same lake we war at—Pyramid Lake."

"Tell him that we are strong and our horses are strong, and that we will break a way through the snow. Tell him that we will give all this cloth and those beads and other valuables, for a guide on across the mountains to the country of the white people there."

Kit did, evidently; gesturing as rapidly as had

the Indian himself, and pointing to the scarlet and blue cloth, and the beads, temptingly outspread.

"Tah-ve! Tah-ve!" chorused all the Indians, shaking their heads. "Snow ! Snow!"

The old man plucked from the ground a bunch of dried grass; he gesticulated, and grunted, and shut his eyes; and suddenly he left the circle, in a great hurry.

"He says," translated Kit, "that if we can break the snow, in three days we'll come to whar thar's grass about six inches high. He's been that fur hunting elk; but beyond that his eyes air shut—he's seen nothing. Now he's gone to get somebody who's been further."

Almost immediately the old man returned with a young man, and posting him in the circle made a talk about him. Kit translated.

"Hyar's a young man who's been an' seen the whites. The old man sw'ars by the sky, an' by the ground, that it air the truth. Mebbe we can get this buck to be guide. I'll try."

"Melo, melo," insisted the old man.

"Melo, melo," nodded the young man.

And——

"Melo, melo," grunted all the squatting semicircle.

"That must mean 'friend,'" mused the lieutenant. "'Melo' for friend; 'tah-ve' for snow; we know two words, anyway."

"Yes, he says he'll go, if we give him enough," announced Kit, after a talk with the young man.

"Tell him we'll give him blankets and scarlet cloth and beads and moccasins and leggins, and more. He'll be rich," quoth the lieutenant.

The young man seemed satisfied; but to make certain of him the lieutenant kept him and two others in the headquarters lodge, that night—with Kit lying just within, across the doorway. And before they all went to sleep, Kit and the lieutenant showed the three, by signs, how from the rifles and carbines could speed a bullet and bore them through and through.

All the night raged a snow-storm. In the morning the prospect was not very inviting, but Lieutenant Frémont made a short address. Lean and bronzed, hair and beard untrimmed, buckskin suit stained and patched, he stood slender, erect, undaunted, his voice sounding with clear emphasis.

"To-day, my men, we rest and make ready," he said. "To-morrow we cross. We might as well do it now, as at any time. It is our best chance. To go back to the lake, among savages of whom we know naught, would be folly; to go on southward, seeking some better passage, would be folly. Here we are; there are the mountains; just on the other side is the Valley of the Sacramento. It can't be more than a hundred miles. We've all heard Kit tell of the beautiful Valley of the Sacramento, with its rich pastures and its fat game, where there is no winter. Only that

KIT AND THE LIEUTENANT SHOWED THE THREE, BY SIGNS, HOW FROM THE RIFLES AND CARBINES COULD SPEED A BULLET AND BORE THEM THROUGH AND THROUGH

UNIV. OF MICH.

hundred miles away is summer, men. Think of it! Who would stay here, on this side, in winter! My instruments tell me (and you know they do not lie) that directly west from us, and less than one hundred miles—in fact, about seventy—is the settlement of Captain Sutter: that Swiss-American who went down into California from Oregon in Thirty-nine, and has founded a post and a farm in the Valley of the Sacramento. He's a Missourian, too, and he'll be glad to see us. Why, I'll wager that from the top of the divide, yonder, we can see into the very valley. One strong effort, lads—one more strong effort, and we'll be in the midst of plenty. Will you follow the guide?"

"Hooray!" they cheered. "Hooray for the Sacramento and summer doings!"

"How about it, boy?" asked Kit, pausing as he passed Oliver. "Do you wish you'd gone back to Touse with Ike?"

"No," asserted Oliver, stoutly, as with stiffened fingers he stitched at his ragged moccasin, to repair it.

"Thar's the lieutenant. I reckon he wants you a minute," continued Kit, rubbing his chin thoughtfully as he surveyed Oliver.

Lieutenant Frémont beckoned. Oliver went over to him.

"Boy, we're about out of meat, except for the animals which we need to break the trail, and for a couple of rabbits; and we ought to be strong to make a good start, in the morning. The men of your mess

ask if they may kill your dog, so that we can eat. He's grown fat, I notice, while the rest of us have been growing thin. What do you say?"

Oliver's heart swelled into his throat, choking him.

"If—if you think best, sir," he stammered. "But there's that other dog. Mine—mine sleeps with me. He's—a—good—dog; an awful good dog."

"I know it, Oliver," replied Lieutenant Frémont. "I know just how you feel. But he may be the means of saving our lives; he couldn't die in better cause, could he? That Tlamath dog is only a pup; we must save him, to grow. Probably we'll have to eat him later. But now——" and hesitating, the lieutenant with his piercing blue eyes examined Oliver anxiously. "We wouldn't ask it if it wasn't necessary. It will be a little sacrifice, on your part, for the general good."

"Well——" faltered Oliver, his voice so weak that he was ashamed of it. "I remember—you and Kit told me I might have to eat dog; but I won't eat *him*. I won't! The rest can." And quickly turning away, for fear that he was going to cry, he stumbled off among the trees.

Soon he heard a shot. That was it. Now his dog never again would nose his hand, or chase rabbits, or snuggle upon his feet, at night.

When Oliver sidled back to camp, trying to appear unconcerned, as befitted a mountain-man, suspicious pieces of fat meat already were laid out upon the snow in anticipation of the pot.

XIX

AT THE LAST GASP

Now was it the dawn of a sharp, clear winter morning, February 2, 1844, in the Frémont and Carson rude camp of one skin lodge and several tents, on the upper water of the Carson River, at the Nevada-California line. Oliver awakened early, under his buffalo-robe brought from Taos: awakened to the crackle of camp fire, the stir of stiff figures, and the sight of Jacob the colored youth hurrying with a tin cup of steaming coffee for the lieutenant in the skin lodge. Jacob always tried to do this—to get the coffee there before the lieutenant his master was dressed. He explained that such was the custom in the south: the members of the family had coffee served to them before they were up.

Oliver awakened to another knowledge. This was the day when the main range of the Sierras was to be assaulted. Everywhere the fresh snow lay deep and trackless; the eastern sky was pink, and about the white peaks of the Sierras, high and close in the west, the clouds were breaking into filaments.

Oliver tumbled out of his coverings. At a little distance the half-frozen horses and mules stood

hunched, tails to the breeze, or were pawing for herbage. Kit Carson was up, Thomas Fitzpatrick was up, the Indian guide was up. He had not escaped. A glorious figure he made, as equipped with new moccasins and leggins, with trousers and a shirt, with blue and scarlet cloth and a large green blanket over all, he stood by a fire.

Lieutenant Frémont emerged in haste from the lodge, and nodded to the Indian—whereupon the Indian pointed to the vasty white pinnacles of the mountains, and with a grunt shook his head. The lieutenant paid no attention to such weak spirit. His voice vivified the camp, and all was hustle.

"Now for summer doings, boys," encouraged Kit Carson, as after breakfast, with packs in place and every man resolved, the procession wended forth through the snow.

"Now for the Californy Valley an' summer doings!" they answered.

The snow had drifted and speedily grew deeper; so that ten men, on the strongest horses, were put in the van to break a trail. Thus work began early. As oft as the horse of the leader was exhausted, his rider turned out, for the rear, and the next rider took his place.

Huts entirely covered by snow, where Indians lived like field mice, were passed: the only sign of inhabitant was the single trail from the hole of a door to the foot of a pine tree, and back.

"Guide says the deepest snow air jest beginning," on the third day announced Kit, with the advance, to the lieutenant.

"There's no use trying to bring the animals on here, to-night," declared the lieutenant, snow-covered and panting. Snow-covered and panting were all. "Oliver, ride down and tell Fitzpatrick to camp at those springs where we were last night; it's more sheltered. We'll camp where we are."

"Yes, sir," answered Oliver.

He met Thomas Fitzpatrick, red-faced, snowy, working like a Trojan to keep the horses and mules moving, and delivered the message. He did not stay, for the camp by the springs in the sheltered basin. He turned about; maybe the lieutenant and Kit and Mr. Preuss and Godey and Bernier would need him.

The camp of the advance squad had been made, without tents, in a group of huge pines. Against the base of one of the pines a generous fire was blazing; and when Oliver arrived, tired and cold and glad of the fire, another old Indian visitor was delivering an oration.

He spoke loudly, in a sing-song manner; and he spoke long.

"He says," announced Kit, "that we an' our critters can't go further, this way. We'll perish, sure. We must turn back, an' he'll show us a better way. Rock upon rock—rock upon rock; snow upon snow—snow upon snow: that's ahead of us. If we get over,

we can't get down on t'other side; thar air precipices whar our hosses'll slip, an' off we'll go."

"Yes; I understood his signs, and most of his words," remarked the lieutenant, quietly. "But we're white men. We're not afraid."

The Chinook lad from the mission, who had kept close by the lieutenant, had understood the signs and words even better than had Kit Carson; and now he began to wail aloud.

"I wanted to see the whites," he lamented, brokenly. "I came away from my own people to see the whites. I would not mind dying among the whites, but to die here—ow-ow-ow-ow," and shuddering he drew his blanket over his head. From underneath it his wail resumed, muffled and weird.

"You ought to have stayed down below, in the Fitz camp," reminded Kit, of Oliver. "It'll be a cold night, hyar, I tell you."

And it was. The lieutenant said that the thermometer was ten above; but a wind set in, sifting through the tree trunks, blowing aside the heat, and penetrating blankets and buckskins. The trees creaked and sighed; the Chinook wailed; more biting waxed the air; and nobody slept much.

When Oliver turned out early, to do his share in looking after the shrunken horses and mules, the Indian guide was pressing to the fire, to be warmer; under all his unaccustomed clothing of shirt and trousers and red and blue cloth and green blanket he

was shivering violently. Chancing to glance back, Oliver saw Lieutenant Frémont throw his own army blanket over the Indian's shoulders already once blanketed; and when Oliver returned, within fifteen or twenty minutes, from the horses, he found the camp much indignant. The Indian guide had disappeared, blankets and all!

The day was spent in bringing up the animals, and in making snow-shoes and sledges. The next morning the lieutenant, with Thomas Fitzpatrick and Kit and others, snow-shoed ahead, to reconnoitre along the pass which the guide had pointed out before he had deserted. They came back, in the darkness, scarcely able to drag their feet, but they brought good news. They had looked over into a large valley, distant but snowless. Kit had recognized the valley as the Valley of the Sacramento.

"I know it!" he declaimed, still much delighted. "I know it by a little round mountain. Fifteen years ago I marked that little mountain, when I war in the valley; an' I remember it jest as plain as if it war only yesterday."

"How far? How far?" demanded all, eagerly.

"Thirty miles, isn't it, Kit?" answered the lieutenant.

"I should say that—an' more," mused Kit, thoughtfully.

"So should I," agreed Fitzpatrick. "We aren't there, yet, boys; over the ridge and down means some

long marches, through the snow. The snow's likely to be heavier, on the west side. But now we know where we're travelling."

"From the ridge we could make out, through the glass, prairies and the line of a river bordered with timber," explained the lieutenant. "But as Fitz says, there are some hard marches ahead."

So there were. By sledges and snow-shoes the trail was resumed, every heart aglow with pictures of the Valley of the Sacramento; but on the level the snow was five feet deep, and in drifts was twenty feet deep. The animals failed, and must be left at each pasture, while with wooden mauls and shovels the men flattened a road, and with pine boughs paved it.

The puppy Tlamath must be added to the larder, so that for the advance there was a strange dinner, one night, of dog (cooked by Alexander Godey Indian-fashion, in pieces hide on), mule, and dried-pea soup!

Now was it the close of two weeks since from the preparatory camp had the start been made. The crest of the pass had just been reached, for on February 16, returning from a scout ahead, the lieutenant and Jacob reported that they had come upon a creek flowing west, toward the Pacific!

As they descended, seeking to travel while yet the night's crust was unmelted, more plentiful waxed the snow, more difficult the trail, intersected by drifts and ridges. However, the lieutenant was convinced that the little stream discovered by himself and Jacob was

the river upon which, lower, would be found the ranch of Captain Sutter the Swiss-American settler. The welcome sound of a thunder-storm in the valley, distant, drifted up to the company's rejoicing ears; and when the storm had cleared, the sunset revealed a shining spot, as if denoting a bay, and a shining line, as if of a river, connecting with it.

The Valley of the Sacramento, and the Bay of San Francisco!

That night, to the yearning, keen-eyed wanderers so high above this spring-land, appeared in the valley numerous fires, as if in answer to the fires of the camp. Thereafter, by day and by night these fires were visible; but the Frémont and Carson men learned, later, that they were simply the fires of Indians in the swamps of the bay shore.

Ice and snow continued. Moccasin soles froze with slush, they would not cling to the snow or the smooth rocks, and their wearers must crawl. Once the lieutenant, reconnoitring with Kit, slipped into the stream, now almost a river, and without hesitating an instant Kit plunged into the icy water after him. The lieutenant thought that he had lost his gun, in the fall; but it was found, after they had made a fire, under the bank.

Nevertheless, the trail was perceptibly lower. The stream had swelled to a torrent; the ground was soft; green grass, birds, and oaks appeared, and a mild breeze swirled the dry oak leaves covering the ground.

This was glorious; but the worn-out animals were being killed, for food.

Lieutenant Frémont announced that they had descended from an elevation of 9338 feet to one of 3864 feet. He said that in the morning he and a squad would push on, by forced marches, for the ranch of Captain Sutter which could not be very far; and that, having obtained provisions, they would hasten back to meet the main party.

"Preuss, Talbot, Jacob, Kit, Derosier, Townes, Proue," named the lieutenant, calling off the detail; and Oliver settled down, disappointed, for he had hoped to go.

He made no remark, and tried to appear unconcerned; but the lieutenant must have read his thoughts.

"Is the boy strong enough? We should take only the strongest men and the best of the horses," spoke the officer, aside, to Kit.

"Wall," drawled Kit, reflectively, eyeing Oliver, "you know it's pretty hard to tucker out a boy. He'll stand more'n a man."

"And Oliver," detailed the lieutenant, as if concluding his list.

Oliver grinned, with cracked lips but glad heart.

The morning was that of February 25. The first ride was one of twelve miles, down the river valley to some old Indian huts. Here, by a field of juicy grass, camp was located; the animals were turned out, and from that moment until daybreak they never ceased

their steady grazing. Throughout the afternoon and the night could be heard the constant champing of their jaws. The lieutenant seemed to take much pleasure in sitting, as long as daylight lasted, and watching them eat.

The next camp was different. Rain forced the march from the river trail to the higher ground, until nightfall; and then camp was made without good grass—which, combined with the rain, appeared to plunge the poor animals into the depths of gloom.

"This won't do," declared Kit. "This won't do, captain. These critters air jest on the narrow edge 'twixt life an' death, an' they've got to have forage an' rest every night, to carry 'em through the next day. It's dangerous, missing grass."

That was true. Now Proveau the buffalo-runner could not keep up, and dropped behind. Jacob was left by the lieutenant to bring him along slowly, while the squad went on, seeking a camping place. Lunch was a boiled mule-head. It furnished a soup.

Jacob arrived without Proveau; but he brought Charles Townes, who worn down by the long privations was becoming crazed. Just at nightfall, when all were well-nigh despairing for the lives of the few horses and mules remaining, the inspiring call of Kit Carson, on before, in the dark ravine, echoed back.

"This way!" he cried. And as they drove the staggering animals for him: "Life yet! Life yet,

boys! Here's a hill-side sprinkled with grass enough for the night!"

Hurrah for Kit—tireless, hard-working, never-say-die Kit!

Proveau the buffalo-runner, Charles Townes' fine young horse from the Columbia River supply, and another Indian horse packed with the cooking utensils failed to join the herd; so that the next day some of the men were sent back after them or any others that had strayed. Baptiste Derosier appointed himself to bring in Proveau.

Oliver remained at camp, in the gorge, to guard the herd. The lieutenant and Kit Carson climbed as high as they could, for a view; and reported that beyond the timber the valley seemed to be as far as ever!

Baptiste and Proveau did not get in, that night; and Baptiste did not overtake the march, the day following. It was feared that he had become lost. Charles Townes was still crazy, and insisted upon swimming in the icy river; he imagined that this was summer-time. At evening Baptiste trudged weakly in. He sat down by the camp fire and began to tell of several days' wanderings—as if he had been gone a long while.

The country was improving, with much grass, and flowers and butterflies, and acorns to eat; and Mr. Preuss walked on ahead of the squad, to sketch the route. That night he did not return to camp. The

next day they found his trail, and they shouted and fired guns; but the only response they received was from an Indian, who in the mutual astonishment ran away.

The march must be continued; but although search right and left and on the back trail was made for Mr. Preuss, no sign of him was discovered. The lieutenant and Kit grew worried; Mr. Preuss had been unarmed, and no one could tell what the Indians might have done to him.

Not until the evening of the third day did Mr. Preuss turn up. While in a beautiful camp among live-oaks of the river valley they all heard a faint shout from the hills behind—and Kit, sharp-eyed, cried, instantly:

"There he is! I see him!"

It was Mr. Preuss, with wavering strides descending for the camp. They had little to offer him, except some roasted acorns bought from Indians. He, on his part, had a story to tell. He had eaten roots, and ants, and raw little frogs, and had tried to smoke live-oak leaves; and one night, in the timber, he had sought out two wolves, thinking that they were Indian dogs. At last he had met several Indians, who seemed afraid of him but had given him roasted acorns. Soon after, he had struck the trail of the squad, and now here he was.

All this time the march of the squad had been following down the course of the south or main fork of

the American River of Northern California, as it rushes from the high western slope of the Sierras for the Sacramento. Almost at the spot where Mr. Preuss rejoined his anxious comrades was discovered, in scant four years, or on January 24, 1848, the placer gold of California, and quickly as spread the tidings down poured, from the Sierras, by the Frémont and Carson trail, the eager Forty-niners.

Mr. Preuss had rejoined the squad on March 5. Only about half the necessary saddle animals were left, but these were strong enough, now, to carry riders; and four and five at a time the squad rode, each division for an hour. Deer were seen, near at hand; the order was, not to pause for them, or for anything, but to press on, press on, for Sutter's ranch, and rescue.

Gold was plentiful, but it was the gold of the California poppy covering the sward. The land was gay with flowers, and dignified with stately oaks. Tracks of horses and cattle were followed, to an Indian village, some of whose inmates wore cloth shirts; yet no information was gained. Next, was expectantly visited an adobe house with glass windows. Only Indians, apparently ignorant, inhabited it. Next, in a broad and grassy valley through which swept gently the noble river, was entered a larger Indian village. Its people were clean and wore cotton shirts and other factory clothing. One of the villagers spoke a little poor Spanish; but he said that there were no whites in that country.

"What!" exclaimed the lieutenant, while the hearts of the squad sank.

At this moment came riding another Indian, wearing a broad-brimmed, peaked straw hat; a ragged blanket through a slit in which his head had been thrust; light-blue cotton trousers; and upon his bare heels tremendous, jingling spurs. He sat in a cumbersome, high-pommelled, high-cantled saddle, with huge block stirrups hollowed out of solid wood. Upon his arm dangled a rawhide riata, or lasso.

"A su disposición, señors," he greeted, in common Spanish. "At your service, gentlemen."

"Is this the Sacramento River?" asked Lieutenant Frémont, in the Spanish.

"No, señor. It is the Rio de los Americanos—the River of the Americans. It joins the Sacramento about ten miles below."

"River of the Americans"! That sounded good; for to American travellers in foreign land the word "American" is sweet.

"Where, then, is the ranch of Captain Sutter?"

"Yonder, señor. I am a vaquero (cowboy) in the employ of Captain Sutter. The people of this village work for him. His house is just over the hill. If you will wait but a moment, señors, I myself will guide you thither. He is a very rich man, and he is always glad to see Americans."

XX

DOWN THROUGH CALIFORNIA

THE vaquero, or cowboy, had spoken truly. Beyond the hill was disclosed to view a large trading post—larger than either Bent's Fort or Fort Laramie; built of adobe, like them, and like them fashioned with blockhouse corners, it had location more attractive, for it stood amidst wheat-fields and natural verdure, beside the sparkling American River.

"El Capitan Sutter comes, señors," announced the vaquero, pointing.

A man had galloped from the post and its fringe of out-buildings, and was rapidly approaching the squad. A short, stout, German-featured man he was, when he arrived: with rosy complexion, blue eyes, crisp moustache, high forehead, bald pate, and a soldiery way about him.

"Welcome, gentlemen," he said, saluting. "Welcome to New Helvetia. I am Captain Sutter."

"I am Lieutenant John C. Frémont, of the United States Army, on a government survey of Oregon and the Great Basin," explained the lieutenant, shaking hands. "We've been forced across the mountains. I've left most of the company behind, while with a

squad I rode in advance, for supplies. Can we get them?"

"Most assuredly. All you want," answered Captain Sutter, promptly. "Come with me."

It was late to start back, to-day, with rescue for the Fitzpatrick party; but much refreshed by the abundant food and the night's lodging at the hospitable post of New Helvetia they took the back trail, early in the morning, with horses and provisions. On the second day out, just before reaching the Forks of the American, they sighted the Fitzpatrick party straggling along—and a sorry party that was. All the men were afoot, tottering as they led tottering horse or mule. Oliver thought that he never had seen such skeletons living; and then it occurred to him that no doubt his own party were just about as bad, and that he was accustomed to them.

The Fitzpatrick party were too weak to cheer; they almost were too weak to eat; but the gaunt wan faces essayed a smile, and one or two hands were languidly waved. Camp was at once made, and the good rich beef and bread and salmon from Sutter's Fort were distributed—cautiously, that the greedy Fitzpatrick men should not over-eat.

Thomas Fitzpatrick, his ruddy face drawn and gray with exhaustion, his white hair ragged, related that because of the melting snows and the rains a number of the pack animals had fallen from slippery precipices and had been killed, their packs lost. All

told, out of the 104 horses and mules with which the expedition had left the Dalles of the Columbia only thirty-three arrived in the Valley of the Sacramento; thus reckoned up Lieutenant Frémont, when, on the next day, camp of the whole company was established where the American emptied into the Sacramento, two miles below New Helvetia.

This New Switzerland, or New Helvetia, as Captain Sutter had named his settlement, and which was known also as Sutter's Fort, was a most interesting place. The post walls were eighteen feet high, enclosing a rectangle 150 by 500 feet; they mounted twelve cannon and were garrisoned by forty Indians whom Captain Sutter (who had been a soldier in France) had uniformed and drilled. Lieutenant Frémont did not think much of the condition of the cannon, nor very highly of the smartness of the Indian soldiery; but all in all, the fort was rather imposing, here in the depth of California.

The jovial captain lived like a Highland chief. Kit Carson called him a king. Nobody interfered with him; he had been pronounced a Mexican citizen, by the governor of Alta California—but, anyway, citizen or not, he was too strong to be driven out. Besides the forty California Indians he employed thirty white men—mechanics, trappers, farmers, etc.; and all the American trappers and settlers in this part of California were free to make his settlement headquarters. His land extended over thirty-three square miles; it

was being grazed and farmed; he possessed 4200 cattle, 2000 horses, 1900 sheep, and sent out many beaver-skins and much wheat. His house, inside the fort, was furnished with regular chairs and beds and tables, of heavy, clumsy manufacture, having been hand-made, from laurel, at the former Russian trading post of Ross, on the sea-shore westward. He sent vessels down the Sacramento and up to Vancouver. He operated a flour-mill and was teaching the Indians to weave hats and blankets and to farm. Yes, powerful and rich and independent was Captain Johann Augustus Sutter, of New Helvetia, above the mouth of the Rio de los Americanos, Upper California. 'Twas at his saw-mill, fifty miles above his fort, that was discovered, in the winter of 1848–49, gold; and speedily his New Helvetia became Sacramento City.

The two weeks' camp of the Frémont and Carson company, at the mouth of the American, was by no means an idle camp, devoted to sight-seeing or sitting in the Captain Sutter laurel chairs. Horses and mules and cattle were to be inspected and bought; new pack-saddles to be put together; bridles repaired, saddles repaired, ropes repaired or purchased, clothing repaired or purchased; Samuel Neal the blacksmith worked constantly at the post forge, shaping horse-shoes, bridle-bits, nails, etc.; and the Sutter flour-mill, grinding by horse-power, was in motion night and day producing flour.

A short council at which Captain Sutter was present determined upon the route home.

"It would be folly to recross the Sierras, here," stated the lieutenant. "I suppose the snow lies on them away into the summer."

"Yes, sir," assured the captain.

"I was thinking, then," continued the lieutenant, "of travelling south, down the Valley of the Sacramento and up the Valley of the San Joachin, that Kit has talked so much about, for the Joe Walker Pass at the lower end of the ranges. And then to strike the Spanish Trail that runs from the Pueblo of Los Angeles to Santa Fé."

"Very good," approved the captain. "It's a fine, well-watered country, with plenty of game, all the way to the southern passes."

"We're not liable to be interfered with, by the authorities, are we?" queried the lieutenant. "This is Mexican territory, and we came in without leave."

"Not so far back from the coast," answered Captain Sutter. "But you'll have to watch sharp, or the Indians, particularly the mansitos, or tamed Indians, as we call the Indians educated by the missions, who have returned to wild life, will steal your animals. They are very bold and clever. They even come down and try to steal our horses at New Helvetia."

"We'll watch," promised the lieutenant.

"No white settlements, captain?" asked Kit.

"None inland, any more than when you travelled

through fifteen years ago, sir," said Captain Sutter. "The whole country back from the line of missions, and the few settlements, along the coast, is a paradise unused except as the haunt of the Indians. It is a fair land going to waste. Some Anglo-Saxon race should have it, and cultivate it. That race will be either England or America; mark my words."

"Let us hope, America," responded the lieutenant.

So fair was this sunny California that Samuel Neal the blacksmith and four others in the company asked to be discharged, that they might remain. The lieutenant let them go; and Samuel entered the employ of the post, at two dollars and a half a day, with promise of advance.

"Anybody seen Derosier?" demanded Mr. Preuss, through the camp, on the day before departure. Already had the camp been moved, in preliminary start, up stream a short distance, to the ranch of Mr. Sinclair, former mountain-man, now a farmer.

Nobody had.

"He's been gone for three days. Does anybody *know* anything about him?"

Nobody did.

And Baptiste Derosier, who had been acting oddly ever since that day, back on the trail, when he had been lost, never was seen again, nor even heard of. It was thought that he must have been drowned, or else had been waylaid by Indians, among the hills. All the

company were sorry, for Baptiste was a willing worker and a "bon camarade."

"Leve! Leve!" at dawn of March 24 resounded through the camp the regulation trapper call to arise. To-day was the start to be made in earnest.

With more horses and mules than ever, to the number of 130; with twenty-five beef cattle and five milk cows; with plenty of flour and coffee and sugar; well-stocked the expedition might proceed upon their way. With them went an Indian boy, assigned by Captain Sutter to be herder of the cavvy, for the horses and cattle were almost as wild as buffalo. It would take an experienced Californian to drive them.

Captain Sutter himself, and several other whites from the fort escorted the company a few miles, to say good-by and "good luck."

Eleven hundred and forty-two miles from the Dalles of the Columbia or 3000 miles from Fort St. Vrain had stretched the Frémont and Carson trail to New Helvetia. Now from New Helvetia to Bent's Fort would be 3000 miles more. However, nobody shrank from the trail as planned. All were strong again in body as they had been strong in heart, and their ample pack-train gave them comfort. Nevertheless, for the first 2500 miles of their journey they could expect to find no settlement of any kind save Indian village.

The lieutenant rode a splendid iron-gray Californian horse, named Sacramento, a gift from Captain

Sutter. The march was down the east side of the Valley of the Sacramento, back somewhat from the river; thence on into the Valley of the San Joachin, which was companion valley reaching up from the south, to meet the Valley of the Sacramento extending down from the north. The country was all that it had been pictured by Kit Carson, and promised by the lieutenant: a country of brilliant flowers, blue and yellow and white and purple, in great masses; of abundant verdure and water; of great herds of elk, deer, wild horses and cattle. And as Captain Sutter had declared, it was a country unused.

As they rode, the lieutenant and Kit waxed more and more enthusiastic, and Oliver heard them say that here was where they hoped some day to live.

Mindful of the cautions as to the horse-stealing Indians, the march was made strictly military. Scouts were placed ahead, and on the flanks, to beat the brush; rifle-men formed van, and rear, and between van and rear were the cavvy, pack-animals and cattle. However, no Indians were sighted until, on April 8, 280 miles from New Helvetia, at the banks of the Tulare River natives appeared.

As soon as these ascertained that the Frémont and Carson men were not California soldiery, they gathered in friendly fashion, and brought otter-skins, and fish, and bread and acorn-flour. They were dark-skinned, handsome Indians. Several spoke Spanish, learned at the missions. They were well-mannered—but the lieu-

tenant and Kit thought best, on the whole, to corral the animals, at night.

It was time that the pass should be near, on the left; the pass through the mountain range, to the desert. A fine broad trail pointed off to the southeast; and upon being questioned as to a pass in that direction one of the Indians nodded, with a smile showing white teeth, and with a "Si, señor; buen camino (Yes, sir; good road)." Following this trail, on for the desert rode the Frémont and Carson company.

The landscape was growing sandy and more bare. Diverging to the left, to ascend along a creek, the company entered, not Walker Pass, but that Tehachepi Pass through which to-day penetrates from desert California into valley California the Santa Fé Railroad, overland line.

While encamped at the western side of the Tehachepi Pass the camp received another visitor. Down the pleasantly wooded slope he came riding, with many a jingle and much graceful sway of body—a combination of knight-errant and cowboy; and a romantic sight he made. He wore a large, peaked hat; short braided jacket reaching scarcely to his waist; black velvet trousers tight at the hips, flaring at the bottoms, and slashed along the seams with white; a sash of crimson; yellow goat-skin boots armed with the huge Spanish spurs. Bridle and saddle were lavishly decorated; chains dangled from the one, brass tacks glistened

in the other. But he was no Spaniard or Mexican; he was an Indian.

"Buenas noches, señors," he greeted, cordially, in excellent Spanish. "Good evening. I saw you enter the pass, and I have come down to bid you have no fear."

"To whom do we speak?" asked the lieutenant.

"To a Christian Indian, señor. I am from the mission San Fernando, near to the Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles (the Town of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels)," he explained. "I have been, by permission of the fathers, to visit my relatives in the Sierras, beyond here. Looking back, I saw you."

"We are much obliged, señor," answered the lieutenant, gravely. "Alight and sit. You are acquainted with the country?"

"Perfectly."

"We are on our way east, to the American States. What lies across this range?"

"An arid, burning desert, señor; impossible for man or beast."

"I remember it," quoth Kit Carson, nodding. "I war across it with Ewing Young."

"Lower down, señor," corrected the Indian, politely. "By the Spanish Trail."

"That war 'fore the Spanish Trail had been broken through; but it mout have been lower down, o' course."

"Then we cannot cross directly eastward?" queried the lieutenant.

"No, señor. Even the Indians cannot. It is the Mohave Desert. But if you desire to travel east, after crossing this pass you should follow south along the foot of the mountains, where is water and grass, to the Spanish Trail to Santa Fé. By this route have just returned six Indians of a great river of the desert, who have been here trading with my people. For two days on my way to San Fernando I am travelling the same road, myself, and I will gladly be your guide."

They thanked him, and accepted his offer.

XXI

THE VENGEANCE OF KIT CARSON

THE Christian Indian of the San Fernando mission rejoined the march, the next morning; amidst gooseberries, humming-birds, and yellow flowers, looked down upon by snow-caps, the pass was threaded; and a very different crossing of the Sierra Range was this, from that experienced but a few weeks back!

Unexpectedly to all the company, as the trail wound down among the foot-hills on the eastern side of the range the desert unfolded to view. There it lay, waiting, like a flat, prone dragon. There it lay, as the guide had asserted: arid, burning, white-hot, with occasional blackish ridges breaking its surface like scales, and with its fevered breath, like a mist, quivering above.

"The great llanos—plains," announced the guide, dramatically waving his hand. "They have no water, they have no grass; every animal that goes upon them dies."

"The Mohave Desert, I reckon it air," said Kit Carson, meditatively surveying. "I crossed it twice, on that Californy trip, but the trail we made war lower down."

"By the Mohave River, señor, perhaps," suggested the guide.

"Guess so."

"That is lower to the south. The Spanish Trail which your company will take follows along it."

On April 17, three weeks from New Helvetia, among the ridges by which the mountains tapered to the desert was encountered a little trail cutting east and west across the southward march. Scarcely could it be traced, so faint and rarely trodden was it; but the guide at once turned east, upon it.

"It is the trail between the Spanish Trail, east, and the mission San Buenaventura, next to Santa Barbara, on the coast," he said.

He rode a few miles, and halted.

"Adios," he spoke. And indicating the thread-like trail: "This is the road. It does not lose itself; it continues on. Follow it, and you will reach the Spanish Trail ahead of the great spring caravan out of the Pueblo de los Angeles for Santa Fé of New Mexico; so you will find the grass uneaten. By that black hill yonder is water. Now I must turn off for San Fernando."

The lieutenant and Kit and Mr. Preuss and Mr. Talbot and others in the van shook hands with him, thanking him again; and the lieutenant further rewarded him with presents of knives and bright cloth. Amidst mutual "Adios (a Dios—God with you)," he left, galloping away for the mission San Fernando

Rey de España (Saint Ferdinand King of Spain), north of the Pueblo de los Angeles which is to-day the City Los Angeles.

Through draws blazing with flowers purple, lemon and orange, and richly perfumed, the Frémont and Carson company followed the little trail eastward until at the dark ridge out upon a sandy plain they camped with water but no grass.

For two days and a half the little trail led eastward. Then, on the afternoon of the third day, April 20, the advance scouts shouted and waved and waited. When Oliver, with the van, arrived at the spot, he also joined in the shout, although not wholly knowing why—save that here the little trail united with a broad, well-defined trail, north and south.

"The Spanish Trail from Californy to Santy Fee, captain," announced Kit Carson.

"It must be," agreed the lieutenant. "And it takes us north, boys! Now we can cross the mountains by way of the Great Salt Lake and the Utah Lake, to strike the head of the Arkansas. We're not to be cheated out of the fine country."

"Hooray!" they cheered.

"It's good-by to Californy," remarked Kit, to the lieutenant, as now the cavalcade turned into this broad trail.

"We'll come again, Kit," asserted Lieutenant Frémont.

And they did; to win the fair land for the United

States, and the lieutenant to make here his home, as he had hoped.

So this was the famous Old Spanish Trail, was it; this bare road of rocky sand scarred by many hoofs, stretching on indefinitely athwart the rolling, sparsely verdured plains?

"You might think it's called the Spanish Trail 'cause the names on it air all Spanish," narrated Kit Carson, as with Oliver he ambled in the dust. "But like as not it's called so 'cause the old Spanish Fathers started it, at t'other end, in their missionary trips out o' Santy Fee. They never cut it through, though. An American did that. I knew his family in Missouri. He war a trader, 'twixt Missouri an' New Mexico. His name war William Wolfskill; an' in fall o' Eighteen-thirty he tuk a trading caravan out o' Santy Fee for Los Angeles, an' he made this trail to try north o' the Heely (Gila) River trail. He thought he'd find better grass. It's regular caravan trail, for hosses an' mules to Santy Fee, an' calico an' blankets an' stuff back ag'in."

"Seems to me that some of these tracks in the trail are fresh," commented the lieutenant, riding up.

"So I war thinking," replied Kit. "Fresh hoof-tracks, an' some fresh Injun tracks. Thar must be a caravan party on ahead o' the main travel; an' those Injun tracks likely air the six fellows spoken of by that mansito. But in sech a wind, blowing the sand, sign air hard to read."

An unpleasant gale was raging—a furious, constant

blast as the cooler air of the mountains on the west rushed down to fill the vacuum caused by the rising hot air of the desert on the east. The Spanish Trail continued, well marked, but with its sharp rocks speedily setting the animals to limping. It was a trail rougher than any part of the Oregon Trail. Oliver heard the lieutenant regretting that the cavvy had not been shod.

The trail had been skirting a river, curious but refreshing as it flowed briskly and sparkling between low banks of the whitish sand. A few cottonwoods and willows grew along it. Oliver observed that although they were descending it, it was getting smaller instead of larger—an odd circumstance.

" It's the Mohave, I reckon," stated Kit. " At least, when I came out with Ewing Young we followed up a river 'bout like this, hyar, on our way from the Colorado to the Californy missions. You watch it, an' you'll see something."

The next morning the lieutenant, during the ride, spoke suddenly:

" There goes our river! "

All near him looked. Kit Carson chuckled quietly.

" Yes; it's flopped for a spell. Now it'll flow bottom-side-up till it's ready to turn over ag'in: the bed's on top an' the water's under. It's the Mohave, sure—tho' I've seen other rivers like it."

" Remarkable! " ejaculated Mr. Preuss, much interested. " It burrows like a gopher of the plains."

" Brave stream! I teenk she gets weak by the sun

an' goes under to get strong, encore," proffered Alexander Godey, gayly.

"What it does is to follow the bed-rock," explained the lieutenant. "The water sinks to the rock. Where the rock stratum lies deep, the water disappears in the sand; where the rock stratum approaches the surface, the water is brought above the sand again."

For about sixteen miles the course of the stream was dust-dry; then, suddenly, out had popped the water, in a series of welcome pools. By the tokens of bones and rags this evidently was a customary camping-ground, between marches. When Oliver, who had been busy helping herd the cavvy, returned to the fires, he beheld there six strange Indians—the six who had been spoken of by the mansito guide, and who had been in advance of the company.

Five were Mohaves, and one was a California Indian who lived with them. All were naked; the Mohaves, of coppery bronze skin, straight legs, tall erect stature, were the handsomest Indians whom Oliver ever had seen. The party were equipped with unusually long bows, and each man carried a gourd, slung in a cord mesh, for water. The Californian spoke some Spanish, learned at the missions. He said that they came from a large village of the Mohaves at the crossing of the River Colorado, below the large canyons, in the desert three days' travel eastward.

"I remember the village," confirmed Kit. "Captain Young crossed thar, when we came out in Twenty-

nine. Injuns war peaceable: we bought a fat mare to eat, an' some squash, for we war nigh starved. But same Injuns had attacked another party, at the crossing, year before, so we war watching sharp."

From the camp where the Indians joined, the Frémont and Carson company followed a little further down the erratic Mohave River, eastward, although the main trail veered more northward, for the ridges. The six Indians were afoot. They claimed that when they brought back horses the northern desert Indians stole them. They also claimed to be poor and hungry; and when, upon the next day's march, three cattle, miserably worn, must be killed, after the camp had satisfied itself the six fell to until they had left only the bones.

The Indians' banquet began in the afternoon and continued all the night. While Oliver and Jacob the colored youth (to whom the Mohaves were as interesting as he was curious to them) were watching them as by daylight they hacked and tore at the carcasses, from the camp welled a significant murmur.

"Somebody coming—riding from the no'th," announced Jacob. "Looks laike they're in a monstrous hurry. What foh, I wonder. Huh! Two men."

"Man and boy; Mexicans," proclaimed Oliver, keener of sight.

Yes, by token of their serapes, or blanket-scarfs enveloping their shoulders, and their bell-brimmed, high conical hats, Mexicans they were; and man and boy

they were; riding desperately, upon foaming, sweating horses, across the trackless sand and rocks, for the camp. As soon as they arrived they were surrounded by an excited audience, and reeling in their saddles were telling their story. The man, with many rapid gestures, and staccato exclamations from the boy as well as from himself, was the chief speaker.

"We are Mexicans, señors," he panted. "Two out of a party of six in advance of the main caravan from the Pueblo de los Angeles for Santa Fé. Thirty horses we had, and we thought by setting out ahead we should get the better grass. Ay de mi! And what happened! The other four were my dear wife, the mother and father of this boy, and a friend Santiago Giacome, who was our guide. We found good grass, and at the camping-place of the Archilette, about eighty miles beyond here, on the main trail, señors, we at last made halt to wait for the caravan to overtake us. We had gone into the desert far enough, being few in numbers. But after we had been at the Archilette, unmolested, for more than a day, señors, several Indians ventured to visit us, from where they had been watching us. They left us, with good words, but in a few days afterward came back with an immense crowd, an army of them, señors; and before we could prepare defence they charged, shooting and yelling. We were only six, and two of us women, with thirty horses. Pablo (and he indicated the boy) and I were on horse-guard; part of the barbarians surrounded the herd, but

Giacome shouted to us to take it and flee—we must save the horses while he and this boy's father fought to protect the women. So we did, the boy and I: we drove the animals right through the savages, and at full speed, with halts only to change saddles from one mount to another, we traversed back down the trail, until this morning we reached the camping spot of Agua de Tomaso, about twenty miles from here. Now having left the herd there, lest the savages should overtake us as well as it, we were hastening on to meet the caravan and inform it, when we sighted your camp, señors. Ay de mi! Alas and alas! Our four companions, two of them women, are murdered—and by this time the horses also are gone!"

"Ay de mi! Mi madre y mi padre!" wailed the boy. "Alas! My mother and my father!"

During the recital the company had listened intensely; and now at the close there was a sudden outburst of ejaculations. Some of the men—Baptiste Tabeau, Alexander Godey, Jacob, Sergeant Zindel, and others—were determined to start at once, to the scene of the attack. The lieutenant restrained them.

"Wait," he cautioned. "I cannot divide the force, boys. We have the camp to look after, to-night. The savages may be coming down the trail. To-morrow we will know better what to do."

"It'd be dark 'fore we got to the place whar the hosses war left," reminded Kit, agreeing with the lieutenant. "Injuns'll travel fast, for a ways, after they

take the herd, till they think they aim't being pursued; then they'll stop for a feast. We'll catch 'em jest as soon if we start to-morrow, when they've slackened up."

Thomas Fitzpatrick concurred.

The Mexican man's name was Andrés Fuentes; the boy's name was Pablo Hernandez. He was about eleven years old, and with his large black eyes, white teeth, smooth brown skin and regular oval features was a handsome little fellow. The twain were told to dismount, and stay. The lieutenant took them into his own mess, and promised them that on the morrow he would do what he could to avenge their wrongs.

Early in the morning the camp was moving, setting course north to enter the main trail, only a few miles distant. Here were many blackish, rocky, bare ridges, with gullies of gravel and sand between. The gullies formed in the spring the beds of streams; and in places wolves had been smart enough to dig little wells, until two feet down they reached the water which they had smelled!

After twenty miles, Andrés Fuentes pointed ahead.

"The Agua de Tomaso—the Thomas. Spring, señors. But I see no horses."

Pablo began to cry, as his memories revived.

The advance scouts, whom Andrés and Pablo were guiding, spread and rode more cautiously, reconnoitring; but the Spring of Thomas was deserted; neither horse-herd nor Indians were there.

The signs were easy to read: the Indians had come in, afoot, from several directions, and had gone out driving the herd.

"I think we'd better follow those rascals, lieutenant, an' teach 'em a lesson, or the trail won't be safe for travel, all the year," said Kit Carson. "If the Injuns get away unpunished, with these hyar hosses, they'll take more. They'll consider they're boss."

"Well," answered the lieutenant, "go ahead, Kit. How many men do you want?"

"Godey an' I'll do. This Mexican'll come, too, if we'll lend him a fresh hoss."

"Three of you, to tackle fifty?" queried the lieutenant. "Isn't that a pretty big job?"

"Wall, I reckon we're enough to stampede the animals, an' raise a little ha'r if necessary," asserted Kit, quietly. "Godey's wuth a dozen ordinary men; an' the Mexican's wife air captured, you remember."

"All right, Kit," responded the lieutenant. "But we're not asking you, or anybody, to go. That's a risky proposition, pursuing Indians into the desert, and fighting somebody else's battle. These are Mexicans—and their own caravan will be along, soon."

"Mexicans or not, they're human beings, lieutenant," declared Kit, refilling his powder-flask. "Pore critters! Think o' having yore own wife out thar, at the mercy o' the savages. An' thar'll be other parties

travelling the trail, with women an' property. No, sir; those Injuns ought to be taught a lesson."

Well mounted and armed, rode away Kit and Godey and Fuentes the Mexican. Now was it mid-afternoon; the company remained in camp at the Agua de Tomaso, to await their return.

There was little talk save upon the one topic: the venture of the two knights errant and their eager companion.

In the dusk of evening a single figure was seen, returning from the direction wherein three had ridden. He came on slowly. The camp was alarmed. It was Fuentes, who explained that his horse had failed, but that Kit Carson and Godey were sticking to the trail.

The night passed; the morning passed, and the sun crossed the zenith to afternoon. The lieutenant fidgeted, ill at ease, for Kit and Godey did not reappear.

"They'll come, captain, but they'll find those Injuns first," assured Thomas Fitzpatrick. "I know Kit and I know Godey. They'll run that trail to the end. Kit never quits when once he has started."

Scarcely had he spoken, when shrill and clear pierced the hot air a faint, distant halloo—a long, high, quavering whoop, drifting in from the black ridge to the north.

"A scalp halloo, or I'm an Injun myself!" exclaimed Fitzpatrick. "There's Kit and Godey, with good news, I'll wager."

Again rose the scalp halloo. All eyes were fast-

ened upon the ridge which closed the vista in that direction. Presently out from around a shoulder concealing a little pass emerged a jostling bunch of horses; two riders were driving; at rapid trot and lope they crossed the little strip of plain, for the camp.

"Kit and Godey! I told you!" cried Thomas Fitzpatrick. "Look at the hosses?"

"The very horses! Those are they—I recognize them; don't you, Pablo?" claimed Fuentes, jubilantly; and he added, now mournful: "But I see only the two persons—the same who went. Ay de mi!"

"Ay de mi! Mi madre y mi padre!" wailed Pablo.

"Godey—he has scalps! See, on his gun!" directed Baptiste Tabeau, capering. "Yes! Two! Tied to the end of his gun!"

"They overtook the Indians as well as the horses," remarked the lieutenant.

With whoop from Kit Carson and wide smile from Godey, triumphant the twain rode in. As said by Baptiste, from the end of Godey's long-barrelled rifle dangled two fresh scalps, of black, Indian hair.

How the camp cheered. As soon as the horses had been thrown in with herd, around Kit and Godey gathered the camp, breathless to hear the story.

"Oh, Godey can tell it," responded to the inquiries Kit. "Thar's nothing to tell, anyhow. We followed the trail an' found the Injuns an' took the hosses an' a couple o' scalps, an' hyar we air."

"And my people, señor—my wife, and the mother and father of Pablo, and Santiago? Nothing of them?"

"Nothing of them, amigo," said Kit Carson, gently; and turned away.

Godey, by no means loath, was recounting, in his dramatic French fashion, while to his words his auditors, particularly the other French, wagged their heads.

"At night we entered the mountains, but as you know there is a moon enough, and we followed the trail clear till midnight. We rode hard, my friends, for we are two mountain-men, and not afraid of these dogs of Pah-Utes, who eat horses and lizards. Then in a black gulch we must stop. Here the moon, being low, did not shine, and the trail was faint among the rocks. We must dismount, and upon hands and knees feel for it. By the sign we knew that the savages were only a few hours in advance of us. They had not eaten, and soon they would wish to taste horse. That is the use to which these desert Indians put the horse and the mule: they eat him, they do not ride him. So lest we lose the trail altogether we tied our horses, and without fire, that we should not be spied upon, in our saddle-blankets we slept upon the cold rocks until daylight. Now might we make a very small fire, of the dried sage, which gave off no smoke, by which we warmed our hands and cooked breakfast. Through the gulch we rode, and after about two miles we sighted the rascally savages. There were four lodges

of them, down in a bottom between bare hills. They thought that no one had pursued them, and that they were secure; for their horses were grazing without guard, and they themselves, about thirty in number, were feasting on horse, boiled and roasted. We could see the kettles and the steaks. Ma foi, my friends, but they were making very merry. Kit and I, we tied our horses below a ridge, and crept down for the horse-herd. By throwing stones and twigs at them we would edge them away, slowly, until we might stampede them. We were doing well, when, name of a dog! A fool of a young horse saw us on all fours, and up went his heels and how he snorted! That was enough. The Indians sprang to their arms. 'Come!' said Kit. 'At them before they have any time!' So down we charged, we two, yelling, and as bold as if we were two hundred. 'Crack!' spoke our rifles; but hein—one Indian fell; only one. 'Scalp for me!' I claimed. 'I count coup on that fellow,' claimed Kit. Pshaw! We had both shot at the same! No matter. I reloaded first, and at the crack I wiped out another. By this time arrows were whizzing around us, from those long, stout bows; one passed through my shirt-collar. Here—see? But the savages had enough; away they scampered, climbing the hills, and hiding in the rocks. They left a boy, and the two dead men. These two we scalped—when, horrible, the one who was shot twice, through and through, jumped up, howling. Wagh! I hope never to see another such a sight!

When he howled, and before we could do what we must do, an old squaw, climbing the hill, stopped and looked back and shook her fist at us and cursed us. Maybe she was the dead man's mother; who knows? Now we were in possession of the camp, which was cleverly hidden in a little bottom or draw, with a good spring. Four or five of the horses had been killed, for a big feast; they were cut up, all ready to fill the pots again. Many more Indians were expected; the pots, and baskets of fifty or sixty moccasins showed this. As for the boy, when he found that he was not to die immediately at our hands, he sat down and gnawed at a horse-head. Ma foi! What lack of feeling! Well, my friends, we destroyed the camp, and left there the boy, eating his horse-head, and collecting the horses we took the back trail."

"Bravo! Good!" congratulated the company.

"You saw nothing of the Mexican prisoners?" queried the lieutenant.

Godey shook his head.

"No, captain. There was no sign. We think that they must be with the other party of the savages or else——" and Godey shrugged his shoulders, significantly.

The lieutenant spoke to Fuentes, informing him. And Fuentes, and Pablo the lad, having shaken the hands of Kit and of Godey, thanking them for the scout, enveloped themselves in their serapes, apart. Sorrow sat heavy upon them. What were the horses,

as compared with wife, and father and mother, and friend?

Oliver overheard the lieutenant talking with Theodore Talbot, the Washington tenderfoot who had won veteran's service-stripes.

"There you see an example of mountain-man work, Talbot," was saying the lieutenant. "That's the spirit beyond the western frontier. Here we have two men trailing Indians—a wily foe—fifty miles through an unknown country; attacking their camp, which showed four lodges, each lodge presumed to mean five to eight or more persons; driving the Indians out, and returning, with the horses, fifty miles again; all in thirty hours. And why? Not only for general good, but to avenge the wrongs suffered by Mexicans who also were strangers. I tell you, Talbot, you'll never meet with a bolder, finer deed of arms. And who performed it? Kit Carson, of Kentucky parentage and Missouri breeding, and Alexander Godey, St. Louis Frenchman: Americans, both."

XXII

POOR TABEAU PAYS THE PRICE

SCALP CAMP was christened this camp, of April 25 and 26, at the Agua de Tomaso or Thomas Spring, latitude 35° 13′ 08″, longitude 116° 23′ 28″, on the Old Spanish Trail in the northern part of the San Bernardino Desert, southeastern California. Ahead upon the trail was the camping-spot of the Archilette, where had been made the attack upon the caravan camp. Thither by forced march proceeded the company.

The Mexican Fuentes informed that the first stretch awaiting was a dry journey of forty or fifty miles. To avoid the heat of day the company pushed on at once, as the sun was setting. While northeastwardly they travelled, by the warm moonlight were revealed to them many white skeletons of horses and mules, strewn along the way; and this was the sign of a dry jornada. Forty-three miles were put behind ere halt was made, before dawn, at a salty, swampy place, illy fitted to refresh. The moon had sunk; but here also the light of dawn disclosed skeletons of animals which had perished from weakness.

On the morning of April 29 they were traversing

a singularly silent, blasted country of blackish ridges and twisted, squat, repulsive cactus.

"The Archilette is just beyond, señor capitan," directed Fuentes.

With eyes and ears alert the advance quickened their pace. From a low ridge of bare rocks Fuentes pointed to a spot of brush and greenness in a sandy basin before.

"That is it," he said.

"Come, boys!" urged the lieutenant. "Charge it." And down at a gallop, rifles and carbines ready, they galloped—the lieutenant on his gray Sacramento keeping the front, Kit racing him hard, Godey and Tabeau and Talbot and Jacob, eager Oliver and anxious Fuentes and little Pablo, and all, thudding to overtake.

But the spring of the Archilette lay unresponsive, seemingly without life. Only, before a willow lean-to which had been a shelter was the mutilated body of Pablo's father, the Hernandez, with both legs and one arm missing. He had stood stanch in defence of his wife. Near by, in another willow lean-to, was the body of Santiago Giacome, a powerful frame, also pierced with arrows. The savages long had departed, and they must have borne with them the mother of Pablo and the wife of Fuentes.

While the party were sorrowfully regarding, out from the bushes crept a small Mexican lap-dog—suddenly, with glad yelps to leap upon Pablo's legs and

lick his hand. The Hernandez dog he was; and not having been noted by the Indians he had remained in lonely vigil here, at this dreadful place, watching and waiting. How glad he was to see Pablo his young master! Pablo picked him up, and carrying him walked along wailing, distracted:

"Mi padre! Mi madre! Ay, mi padre y mi madre! (My father! My mother! Oh, my father and my mother!)"

Fuentes wrapped his head in his serape, thus to mourn.

None in the company wished to stay here, but there was no other camping-spot, and the animals must have water. The lieutenant wrote upon a piece of paper a brief story of the tragedy, and by a cleft stick planted it so that the approaching caravan might know what had befallen their comrades. The Archilette was renamed Hernandez Spring—Agua de Hernandez. It is in extreme Southwestern Nevada.

The march was waxing cruelly severe upon the animals. By water and grass were they grudgingly nourished, but by the rocks of the innumerable ridges were their hoofs cut to the quick. Mule and horse dropped daily. When they died by pain and exhaustion, or must be shot, Fuentes the Mexican quickly cut off mane and tail for hair bridles, saddle-girths, etc.

Amidst increasing hills, abloom with cacti and acacia, and over a low snowy mountain into another skeleton-strewn dry jornada, of almost sixty miles,

rode the Frémont and Carson men. By chewing the acid sour dock, and by sucking at the pulpy bisnaga cactus known to Fuentes the Mexican, they moistened their thirst; until at midnight the California mules, breaking into a run, gave warning of water scented more than a mile before. This was the Rio de los Angeles, or River of the Angels, tributary to the Virgin River which itself flows south into the canyoned Colorado.

Upon the bluffy bank of the Rio de los Angeles, today styled only the Muddy River, must camp be pitched. At daybreak Indians swarmed down. With the first sight of them, frightened Pablo and his little dog ran to hide in a tent and Fuentes the man exclaimed, in furious Spanish:

"There they are! The murderers! The same people who killed at the Archilette! Curses on them!"

A bare-footed, bare-skinned, under-sized tribe they were, ill-looking, their hair tied in a knot atop their sharp, restless-eyed faces. Many of them carried hooked sticks, with which they hauled out lizards and other vermin from holes, to cook them and eat them. All the men bore the long, stout desert bow, and wore a quiver bristling with thirty or forty arrows fitted to points of volcanic glass, or obsidian.

Every Indian who would enter the lines of the camp was told to leave his bow and arrows outside; but defying the orders an old chief and several com-

panions forced their way in, bow in one hand, two or three arrows ready in the other, and quiver at back.

"Vamose! Puk-a-chee! Get out! Outside!" were volleyed at him the cries; and he impudently put his fingers in his ears, as sign that he could not hear.

Gazing about the camp, he counted on his fingers the inmates—including a mule that was being shod! He counted twenty-two.

"Why, there are none of you," he jeered. "But of us——" and he pointed to the hills and mountains, "there are many, many." He pointed to the rifles, of which he appeared to think little. "You have those." He twanged his bow. "We have these!"

Up sprang Kit Carson, who had been sitting near. His tanned face was white-hot, his grayish eyes flamed bright blue. The filthy Indian's contemptuous, ignorant words had stung him to the quick. He was the Kit Carson of the Kiowa fight, at the wagon-train corral on the Santa Fé Trail. Not since then had Oliver witnessed him so angry.

He had cocked his rifle; with one hand he clenched it, and the other hand he shook under the Indian's nose.

"Don't say that, old man!" he bade, in short, stern tone. "Don't say that, unless you want to die."

He spoke in English; and the old chief recoiled, his eyes darting the venom of a snake's, as if he understood.

Oliver stepped forward, ready to help the man he

loved. Through the camp sped the click of gun-locks.

"Steady, Kit," now warned the lieutenant, alarmed. "We're avoiding trouble, remember. He's only an ignorant Digger."

"No Injun, Digger or not, can come into camp whar I am an' talk that way. We're boss in this camp; it's our camp," declaimed Kit, still angry. "They can insult us from outside, 'cause that air Injun way; but if we once get to letting 'em in, with arms, they'll massacree us, sure. This ought to be stopped right at the start, captain." And again he applied himself to the hateful old chief. "Get out! Go!" Pointing, with stamp of foot, while he relaxed not his glare, Kit Carson at that moment looked to Oliver as fancy once had painted him—eight feet tall and four broad.

Slightly wilting, but defiant, the old chief and his squad reluctantly slunk away.

"Well," commented the lieutenant, when all breathed easier, "that old fellow was nearer his end than he ever will be again until he meets it."

Several horses and mules had been left behind, on the trail, to be brought along, later, after they had rested. Thomas Fitzpatrick, who had gone back after them, now reported that they had been killed by the Indians, cut up, and the fragments spread upon the brush, to cure. This evening the lieutenant turned over to some of the Indians another horse, for a feast; but instead of pleasing the tribe it only made those Indians who got none the more insulting.

It was the late afternoon of May 9, and the company had travelled twenty-eight miles up the Virgin River from the point where, twenty miles across from the Muddy, they had struck it. Now they were encamped in the northwestern corner of Arizona, at the foot of the Beaver Dam Mountains, and about opposite the stream which here comes into the Virgin. The camp was drowsy, after long and ceaseless vigils. A high wind had died away to merely a faint breeze which scarcely disturbed the summer temperature. Over the mountain ranges to the north rested masses of white cloud, which the sun, about to set, was tinging pink. A strong horse-guard was out with the animals, in charge of Baptiste Tabeau. Two sentries watched the camp, from either end. Most of the members off duty were dozing; but the hour was at hand when the mess fires must be built up. The lieutenant had been asleep, in his lodge, for three hours. The outlines of him could be seen, through the open flaps, and under the raised edges.

As Oliver, who was sitting cleaning his rifle, glanced at him again, the lieutenant stirred, as if awake; at that moment Kit Carson, buckskin-clad, wiry little man, came striding quick, rifle, as customary, in hollow of left arm.

"You awake, captain?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"Haven't seen Tabeau, have you?"

"Baptiste?" The lieutenant sat up. "No. He's on horse-guard, isn't he?"

"Wall, he rode down the trail, after his lame mule we left at t'other camp a mile below."

"Hasn't he come back?"

"Haven't seen him."

"How long ago?"

"This morning."

"What!" The lieutenant hastily stood. "Who gave him permission?"

"Don't know. He tuk it, I reckon. Knew we needed the mule."

"I've been asleep for some time. He may have come into camp." The lieutenant spied Oliver. "Have you seen Tabeau, boy?"

"No, sir."

The lieutenant joined Kit, outside the lodge.

"This must be looked into. He ought not to have done it—he ought to have notified us and have taken a squad."

"It war only a mile, he said; so I hear," observed Kit.

"A mile is a long way, in Injun country, Kit. Hello! What's that?" and the lieutenant pointed.

The eyes of all persons thus notified leaped to the spot. About a mile below, or down the river, had upwelled into the calm evening air a column of thick white smoke.

"Tabeau's gone," exclaimed Kit, instantly.

"That's a coup smoke, to tell a scalp's been taken an' everybody should look out!"

"You think it means Tabeau, then?"

"Sartin. That's whar he started for—that cottonwood grove whar the camp war. The smoke's at the very place."

"Take whatever you can get the quickest and go down there at once," ordered the lieutenant. "If you ride hard you may not be too late."

"We'll ride hard, but we'll be too late, captain," answered Kit, already striding away.

As he passed, he responded to Oliver's appealing gaze.

"That rifle ready?" He must have noticed the cleaning operation.

"Yes, sir."

"Get yore hoss an' come along. See that you don't lack powder, lead or caps." And not having paused, Kit Carson continued upon his own way.

Quickly spread the word, that Baptiste Tabeau had been "wiped out." Many more volunteers offered themselves to Kit than he could use. Everybody liked Tabeau; everybody wished to succor him, or to avenge him. However, Kit deemed that a small party, if well-armed, would be enough; so he chose Oliver, and Baptiste Bernier, Charles Townes, Godey, and Thomas Fitzpatrick—mountain-men all.

Scarcely a word was spoken, as they galloped forth. The errand was one of sorrow and grim determination.

The mile was covered, and the last night's camping place lay right ahead. Now the high, gloomy ridges bordering the Virgin were closing down, and the camping place appeared sombre. Extending their front the posse rode right in—eye and ear and finger ready; but it was as silent and deserted as had been the Hernandez Spring at the Archilette. Of Baptiste and his horse, and of the lame mule which he had quested, not a trace could be found.

"Better ride on down," suggested Charles Townes.

"Ought to search those cottonwoods, across," said Kit.

"That's a risky business, in the dark, when Injuns are better than white men," remarked Thomas Fitzpatrick, nevertheless urging his horse into the water. Oliver promptly did the same.

"I know it, Tom," answered Kit. "But we'll have to take the risk."

Alexander Godey interrupted. He had been examining for sign, on down the trail.

"Here," he called. "I find it! The lame mule, an' the savages beside him. En avant, camarades! The savages would drive off the mule, an' Baptiste, he follows."

Godey had read truly. Where he awaited, in the dusk could be descried, imprinted upon the sandy dust, hoof-marks of a hobbling mule, pointing back down the trail, with the bare soles of Indians on either side of them. Moreover, the hoof-marks of a horse,

probably Tabeau's horse, also were to be descried, pointing in the same direction, but printed *upon* the others—therefore later.

So they followed the trail. After about an hour of steady, silent riding, a rustle in some bushes was heard.

"S-st!" warned Kit.

They halted, short, and peered, and listened, holding breath. Kit and Godey slipped from their horses, to steal forward, noiseless as shadows. Presently they returned, as silently.

"It's the mule," reported Kit. "It's the lame mule, with an arrow in her side, standing thar, to die. They shot her an' left her till they'd come back."

"Anything of Baptiste?" demanded Fitzpatrick.

"We found a wet place—wet an' sticky—in the brush. Too dark to say jest what it air," stated Kit, succinctly. "But it, an' the smoke, taken together, strike me as bad. Don't believe we can do more till daylight. We mout as well go back to camp."

That was agreed; and sorrowfully again they rode up the trail, soon to be guided by the glow of the camp fires.

Little doubt could there be as to Baptiste Tabeau's fate, but of course his disappearance must be probed to a certainty. At day-break the lieutenant himself, with Thomas Fitzpatrick and Kit and Godey and several others (Oliver being assigned to guard duties), de-

parted for the wounded-mule brush, in search of further sign.

When they returned, about noon, they brought only the news which had been feared. Daylight had shown the worst: crimson stains and crushed bushes where Baptiste must have been pierced with an arrow; a crimson path for twenty paces, where he had desperately struggled along; a spot where he had fallen; and then the trace where he had been dragged to the river and thrown in. A shred of leather, from his saddle, was found; but all else—horse, gun, clothing—had vanished completely. The Diggers had taken them. Even the wounded mule was gone.

Thus, May 9, 1844, perished wilderness-breaker Baptiste Tabeau, Frémont man from St. Louis. The place of his death is on the left bank of the Virgin River in northwestern Arizona. So, in many a lonely spot, sleep the brave; their monument their deeds achieved for others.

XXIII

THE HOME STRETCH

FAIN would the Frémont and Carson men have taken the war trail and have avenged the murder of their comrade; but their horses and mules were crippled, the country was vast and strange, they must push onward to safety. So they headed, as before, into the northward. Amidst the general mutterings of anger and bated revenge Kit Carson it was who remarked, quietly:

"Wall, the Good Book says something about reaping whar we have sowed. White men did the fust killing, when the Joe Walker party shot down these hyar same Diggers, on the march across from the Salt Lake in Thirty-three. Now thar's war, an' thar ever will be, an' the white man air to blame, but the Injun'll suffer most."

The country grew better, in appearance; cedars and pines flourished upon the hills, birds were present, and before uplifted snowy mountains of a loftier range. At the Vegas de Santa Clara, or the Meadows of Santa Clara, near to the Virgin River, the company were in southwestern Utah.

The Frémont and Carson company could delay

only a day at the pleasant Meadows. Soon after leaving the camping place they noted a moving cloud of dust on the trail behind; out of the dust cloud evolved hurrying figures—a little squad of horsemen.

"Whites!" pronounced Kit, at once. "Americans, too—an' ride like trappers." And—"If that airn't old Joe Walker, leading 'em, I'll eat him," he added.

The pursuing squad, nine riders, and several pack-animals, drew on at fast trot. The foremost was a horseman splendidly large of stature, with plentiful gray whiskers covering cheeks and chin. He threw up his hand in salute; Kit and the lieutenant answered in kind.

"Hello, Kit," he called.

"Hello, Joe. Whar you bound?"

He had arrived, and pulled short.

"Jest looking for company. Saw your sign down the trail, an' started on to overtake ye."

"Wall, you've done it," commented Kit, coolly. Whereupon he introduced to one another the lieutenant and Captain Joe Walker, mountain-man, trapper, trader, guide.

The captain had started from Los Angeles with the annual main caravan for Santa Fé. Seeing the trail of the Frémont and Carson company, with eight men, Americans all, he boldly had set out, across the desert, to catch the expedition. That was just like old Joe Walker, Kit Carson afterwards declared. They

had fought with the Diggers, killing two and in turn receiving wounds among the horses; and here they were.

For such a fighter and adventurer Captain Joe Walker bore a singularly mild, although determined visage, from which clear blue eyes peered out, above the whiskers. Oliver was attracted by him at once, and was glad when he heard him agree to guide the company across the mountains, ahead. He had made a specialty of the Great Basin and the approaches to it, and had traded much among the Utes, whose country bordered it on the east of the Salt Lake. Therefore the region now toward the northeast was familiar to him.

In central Utah the Old Spanish Trail turned short, and east and southeast ran down for Santa Fé. This would be the direct route for Taos and even for Bent's Fort; but the lieutenant wished to visit a lake called Utah Lake, near to the Salt Lake; thence cross the mountains back of the Salt Lake and working over to the head of the Arkansas River, follow it down to Bent's Fort. The Californians Andrés Fuentes and Pablo the boy decided to stay with the company, instead of going direct to Santa Fé.

So from the turn of the Old Spanish Trail the course was still northward, with the Wasatch Mountains (the same which skirted on the east the Great Salt Lake) snowy at the right. They were greeted as

friends; good they looked to Kit Carson and the other mountain-men.

The Sevier River barred the way. In California a river, barring, had been crossed by means of hides removed from freshly slaughtered cattle and stretched upon sticks. The Frémont and Carson company now had no cattle left; but undefeated, out of bundles of bulrushes they fashioned sharp-pointed rafts.

At this crossing, of the Sevier River, central Utah, May 23, 1844, was killed by accident François Badeau, who shot himself through the head in drawing toward him his gun, muzzle first. He was buried upon the bank of the stream, and there are his bones, to-day. He, too, had paid the adventurer's price, as well as, in his case, the price of foolishness. The muzzle of a gun always is dangerous.

Lovely Utah Lake unfolded to the view. It was the property of the Ute or Utah Indians, who made of it their fishing preserve.

Only some thirty miles to the north, and connected by a river was the Great Salt Lake where in the previous September the company had encamped. Therefore had they almost completed an immense circle of 3300 miles, and after nearly nine months they were within thirty miles of the starting point.

Nevertheless, they had not crossed the Great Basin; they had only skirted it, seeking an entrance. However, even the veteran Joe Walker could give little definite information upon that unknown interior.

"No, sir; I never have been into the desert, west o' here," he declared, to the lieutenant. "I've been in by north, along the Mary's River, an' I've been in by south, along the Spanish Trail; but not by the middle. The Diggers can tell little. But I'm pretty sure o' one thing: there are no rivers flowing out, to any sea. The desert has its own system o' lakes an' rivers. It's evaporation that drains the basin, an' not outflowing. There's no Buenaventura, sir."

"I believe so, myself," agreed the lieutenant. "I've prepared what I shall report; namely: 'The Great Basin: four hundred miles long, five hundred miles wide, surrounded by lofty mountains; contents almost unknown, but believed to be rivers and lakes which have no communication with the sea, deserts and oases which have never been explored, and animals and savage tribes which no traveller has seen.' Next time I hope to go into it, and fathom some of its mysteries. We shall be better prepared. A good place to strike next time is right through this gap of thirty miles; say by way of the south end of the Salt Lake."

"When do you calculate to make the trip?" queried Captain Walker.

"Next spring and summer. Kit has promised to come. Do you think you will be free, captain? We'll need a good guide for the desert; I'd like to engage you."

"I'll do it," said the captain.

Entrancing to-day is this Utah Lake, of fresh water

lying blue between the snowy Wasatch and the hazy Oquirrh or Squirrel Ranges, with the Great Salt Lake showing silver sheen amidst the lowlands to the west of north. When on May 25 the Frémont and Carson company arrived, two villages of Utes were encamped by the lake, waiting for the fish to ascend into the rivers. These fish were salmon-trout, but not so large and so tasty as the salmon-trout of the Pyramid Lake, far across the desert.

Attractive though the spot was, the Frémont and Carson company must not linger; the Utes were greedy and troublesome, the trail yet was long, for more than a year the lieutenant had been cut off from news of home, well-nigh for a year Kit had not heard from his bride.

Under guidance of Captain Walker, up the Spanish Fork River which from eastward enters the Utah Lake they journeyed, and from the head of the Spanish Fork River north into the Uintah country of present northeastern Utah. Here, latitude 40° 27′ 45″, longitude 109° 56′ 42″, at the first forks of the Uintah River, above where it empties into the mighty Green, was the fur-trading post of Fort Uintah, whose owner, lean, swarthy Antoine Roubideau, or Robidoux, was a Taos man.

At Fort Uintah was enrolled by the lieutenant Auguste Archambeau, a Canadian Frenchman, who wished to go on to Missouri, and who enlisted as a hunter. Auguste speedily made himself a favorite, for

he was well built, cheerful, and a mountain-man equal to Alexander Godey.

On through rich mountain country, along the borderline of northwestern Colorado and southwestern Wyoming, rode the company; as they went, feasting upon buffalo, for the hunters' rifles were ever busy. In the morning of June 13 the Continental Divide of the Rockies was topped, and with a cheer all hailed a little stream trickling for the east. This was the Atlantic Slope of the continent; it was the United States.

Flowers bloomed, aspens quivered, grass and bush spread fresh and green, clear and cold ran the streams, and on every side grazed buffalo, elk, and antelope. South through the North Park of Colorado turned the march, and down into Middle Park, where rise the waters of the Grand River flowing west to join with the Green.

But although glorious appeared the landscape, and "fat" it was with game, Utes, Arapahoe and Sioux made of it a battle-ground; therefore the march must be cautious. Each night the camp was fortified; by day scouts were thrown out, ahead, from high places to examine the country.

The road was one made by buffalo, but it also was one used by the Indians; and according to the moccasins found upon it, and the traces of lodge-poles, an Arapahoe village must be travelling, before. The lieutenant and Kit and all hoped that a meeting might be

avoided; but on the morning of June 18 Archambeau and Godey, among the scouts ahead, from a butte shook a blanket, as signal of Indians in sight!

"Close up, close up!" warned the lieutenant and Joe Walker; and in response to the word transmitted adown the line Thomas Fitzpatrick hastened his pack-train. The flankers drew in a little; and at faster pace proceeded the company, as a hollow square, animals in centre.

"Thar they come," announced Kit. "'Rapahoes, too. Humph! Treat 'em as well as we can an' get rid of 'em quick as we can. They'll be spoiling for a fight."

Along the valley were trudging and riding about thirty Indians, both women and men. They boldly met the company, and demanded presents. They claimed that they were going into the hills after roots and game; but instead, as the cavalcade resumed the march, the bucks wheeled around and galloped back in the direction where they said they had left their village.

"We'd better be forting," counselled Joe Walker. "Did you know any of 'em, Kit?"

"Never saw one of 'em at Bent's, as I remember," confessed Kit.

Down to the Grand River hurried the company, and to some willows between the channel and an overflowed meadow. They had no time to fort further, even by piling up their packs, when on came again

the Arapahoes, fully 200, painted and flourishing weapons and apparently eager for a fight.

"Set that flag out, in front, somebody who talks Arapahoe, and tell them if they pass it, we fire," ordered the lieutenant.

Alexander Godey grabbed it; but Kit Carson rode out with him. They planted the staff in the moist ground, and standing by the Stars and Stripes signed to the Indians to halt. Kit shouted the instructions. Two of the Indians rode forward, in token of parley.

"One o' them's a Sioux," asserted Thomas Fitzpatrick. "Isn't that so, Auguste?"

"I think it is," affirmed Archambeau. "Sioux an' 'Rapahoe together mek it bad; eh?"

The conference soon dissolved, and with one of the Indians Kit loped back to the willows; Godey remained, amicably squatting and talking with the other.

"They're 'Rapahoes, an' some Sioux," explained Kit. "This hyar's an old Sioux chief, who wants to meet our head chief."

The old Sioux—a grizzled, stout, but fine-looking veteran, wearing a necklace of grizzly-bear claws—shook hands warmly with the lieutenant, and delivered a harangue. Kit translated.

"He says he's always been friendly to the whites. 'Fore that gang started from the village they held a council, an' most of 'em voted to attack us, 'cause we'd been with the Utes, an' like as not had sold 'em guns an' ammunition. But the Sioux, an' a few

'Rapahoes who'd seen us last year on the plains, an' knew about us, voted ag'in it. He says the Sioux air pore, an' ought to be given a lot o' valuable presents for the way they voted. I expect the 'Rapahoes'll want as much."

"I suppose so," groaned the lieutenant. "No matter how they voted, they'll want the presents."

Therefore presents were liberally distributed, under the folds of the Flag, gently waving, perhaps for the first time, here beside the Grand River in north central Colorado.

Through Middle Park the trail continued, and so did the evidences of the Arapahoes. At the south end of the park six beaver trappers were met. They informed the lieutenant that two of their party already had been killed by the Arapahoes, and that if he would wait they would like to pack up and get out. He sent Kit and Archambeau and Godey with them, to help.

When the squad again joined the command, they brought alarming news. Near the trapper camp they had suddenly been stayed by a band of Arapahoes, much excited. The Arapahoes said that their people were about to make a great attack upon the Utes, in the Bayou Salade (which as South Park lies adjacent to Middle Park, on the south), and that they had been sent to guide the white men back that they might help the Arapahoes kill the Utahs! Kit had answered that the white men were far ahead, and would join them in

the Bayou Salade. Whereupon the Arapahoe scouts rode off to their people. Kit chuckled.

"We'll have to take care an' not meet 'em. They've got us in a tight corner. Back yonder on the river we swore we war the 'Rapahoe's friend, an' had nothing to do with the Ute nation. Now if we won't help our friends fight, what air we? An' if we do help 'em fight, whar'll we be, with the Utes."

"Well, it isn't our quarrel, that's sure," declared the lieutenant. "The Indians can fight their own fights, and we'll mind our own business. The Arapahoes would like nothing better than to array the Utes against us."

Southward still, over the dividing range into the South Park they hastened; and at the western verge sounded the warning, again:

"Injuns ! Injuns!"

A mounted party of dusky, long-haired figures were descending from a ridge which intersected the valley, before. If these were pesky Arapahoes, once more, perhaps seeking the white men to escort them to the battle, then the company must watch out.

"Make for those islands, boys," ordered the lieutenant; and into the shallow river, to a willow patch, plashed the Frémont and Carson men.

"Those are squaws," cried Captain Walker.

Ute squaws they proved to be. They eagerly hastened to the company, and with gestures and loud exclamations and weeping told their story. Beyond the

ridge was their village; early that morning the Arapahoes had charged it, killed four men including the head chief, and driven off many horses to a forted hollow a mile below. But the brave Ute warriors, 300, had rallied and pursued them; and now a great fight was in progress. If the white men would help the Utes their friends kill those dogs of Arapahoes, they should have the best horses at the village to carry them into the battle.

"Let's get out o' hyar. Have to get out o' hyar. More trouble," announced Kit, shaking his head at the clamor of the Ute women.

Speedily the cavalcade was put in motion, to abandon the dangerous neighborhood. Vainly the Ute women followed, urging, wailing, and plucking at the clothing of the white men, to bid them join in the fight. Turning off at the ridge, and keeping it between them and the village, with a line of scouts riding the summit to watch the other side, the company left the valley as rapidly as possible. Soon the women must cease their urging, and gallop back to their village. The spiteful cracks of rifles, and the whoops of the red warriors, now were plainly heard; gazing down from a break in the ridge Oliver and all could see the Ute village, in disorder, with dead and wounded being hurriedly brought in. However, according to the Ute women, their braves were having the best of the fight. It was the opinion of Kit and other mountain-men,

also, that warrior for warrior, the Utes could whip the Arapahoes.

With course southeast, the company crossed from the South Park to the tributaries of the Upper Arkansas; and penetrating through the rugged country lying between Cripple Creek and Cañon City, Colorado, on June 28 arrived at the Arkansas River itself. Old friend was the Arkansas, for now below, on it, waited Bent's Fort, at the crossroads of the long trail.

At sunset of June 29 the settlement of the Pueblo was reached. Here the six trappers stopped, and here Kit received word that all was well at Taos. Now Bent's Fort was but seventy-five miles. The trail along the Arkansas was broad and well beaten; the animals appeared to know that something especial was just before, and they travelled briskly.

Ere mid-morning of the second day, July 1, from the advance Oliver, greeting many a familiar object, spied it, ahead—that one object for which in particular had he been peering: the plains citadel of Bent's Fort. Amidst the fringe of cottonwoods its massy dun clay walls were limned against the flowering herbage and the sage.

"Hooray! Hooray!" Hats flew into the air, and the reports of the carbines and rifles were answered by cannon.

The flag of the ramparts was streaming to welcome the flag of the cavalcade; and as the cavalcade drew

nearer, several horsemen dashed from the gate-way, to give personal greeting.

"Thar's George Bent. Reckon William air away," commented Kit.

George Bent it was, younger brother of William, but a partner in the Bent, St. Vrain & Co. firm. He was much at Taos.

"Hello, George."

"How are you, Kit? Hello, Joe! Where'd you hail from? Come right along into the post, gentlemen. Glad to see you back. How far have you been?"

"'Bout six thousand miles," answered Kit. "How's my wife, George?"

"Very well indeed, Kit. Nothing has changed since you left, I believe. Let's see—just about a year, isn't it? We've all been looking for you. They'd almost given you up for lost, in the States, lieutenant."

Thus speaking, George Bent conducted the company to the post.

This was to Kit a second home: but he was anxious to turn south for his first home—old Taos, where bided Josefa, his young wife. Oliver was as ready, for at Taos was Ike, maybe, or Sol, or William New, to whom to tell tales of the trail that they had missed.

However, at the post a "big" Fourth of July had been planned. The lieutenant had decided to stay for a banquet, and Kit and Oliver must stay. So they did. After the feast Lieutenant Frémont himself asserted that not even in Washington or St. Louis had he ever

sat down to a finer menu than this, served in honor of the Fourth and of the expedition, at Bent's Fort in the Indian country, 500 miles from the frontier.

On the fifth the lieutenant was to continue on for Washington. Fuentes and Pablo, the two California Mexicans; the Chinook youth from the Dalles of the Columbia; and Sacramento the iron-gray horse from Sutter's Fort, remained with him in his train. Captain Joe Walker wished to stay at the post for a time. Alexander Godey was to seek St. Vrain's, his former station. Kit and Oliver were for Taos. The lieutenant, last of all, shook hands with them.

"You'll not forget next year, Kit?" he reminded. "We're to try that desert again, you know—and work north from Sutter's to Vancouver. The Sacramento Valley calls."

"I'll not forget," promised Kit. "I'll be ready."

"And you, my lad—you've had enough of the explorer's trail, I fancy," addressed the lieutenant, to Oliver.

"No, sir," said Oliver, "I haven't."

"Bravo!" laughed Lieutenant Frémont. His fine blue eyes flashed. "You'll do. You're one of my company. You've got the heart of a man, and it takes a man to follow Kit and me."

END.